# BRANWEN
# DAUGHTER OF LLŶR

A STUDY OF THE IRISH AFFINITIES
ND OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE SECOND BRANCH
OF THE MABINOGI

PROINSIAS MAC CANA

UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS

Students of Celtic literature are agreed that the *Mabinogi* has been influenced in its form and content by Irish literature and tradition, but opinion differs considerably on the question of the extent of such influence. The present work devotes itself primarily to a study of the Irish affinities of the second Branch, *Branwen*, and proceeds to an analysis of the general structure of the tale.

The author, who is at present a specialist Lecturer in Irish in the Department of Welsh at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, maintains that the borrowings in *Branwen* from Irish literature are extensive; that the tale is later than the other three and is not rooted so firmly in Welsh mythology, folklore and tradition; and suggests that it was composed towards the end of the eleventh century by a literary artist steeped in Irish literature. This detailed examination, and especially the comparisons drawn between numerous elements in *Branwen* and themes in Irish literature, provides a significant contribution to the study of the *Mabinogi*.

Pric

# BRANWEN DAUGHTER OF LLŶR

# BRANWEN
# DAUGHTER OF LLŶR

A STUDY OF THE IRISH AFFINITIES
AND OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE SECOND BRANCH
OF THE MABINOGI

By
PROINSIAS MAC CANA

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS
1958

*Printed by Hugh Evans & Sons, Ltd., The Brython Press,*
9-11 *Hackins Hey and* 350-360 *Stanley Road, Liverpool.*

*TO*

*MY FATHER AND MOTHER*

# CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| Foreword | | ix |
| Abbreviations | | xi |
| I | The Question of Irish Borrowings | 1 |
| II | An Outline of the Second Branch | 8 |
| III | The Obvious Borrowings from Irish ..... | 16 |
| IV | Other Elements of Irish Origin ..... ..... | 38 |
| V | Miscellaneous Elements in *Branwen* | 102 |
| VI | Manawydan : Bendigeidfran : The Sub-titles | 122 |
| VII | Branwen ..... ..... | 151 |
| VIII | The Author and His Work | 174 |
| Appendix | | 191 |
| General Index | | 195 |

# FOREWORD

The following study is based upon a lecture delivered to the Cambrian Archaeological Association in the Spring of 1956. It is intended to compensate in some degree for the fact that the late Professor W. J. Gruffydd was not spared to publish his proposed work on *Branwen* which would have completed in broad outline his investigation of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi.*

My thanks are due to Professor Thomas Jones, whose suggestion it was that I should write this book, for having read the completed study and for his readiness at all times to discuss my problems ; to Professor D. A. Binchy who kindly consented to read my work and made a number of helpful suggestions ; to Mr. I. M. Williams of the University Press Board for his patience ; and finally I cannot but acknowledge my great indebtedness throughout to the late W. J. Gruffydd, who, had he lived a little longer, would have made this book unnecessary.

PROINSIAS MAC CANA.

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *Arth. Trad.* | *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes* by Roger Sherman Loomis. New York, 1949. |
| BBCS | *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*. Cardiff, 1921-. |
| CA | *Canu Aneirin* ed. Ifor Williams. Caerdydd, 1938. |
| CLlH | *Canu Llywarch Hen* ed. Ifor Williams. Caerdydd, 1935. |
| EIHM | *Early Irish History and Mythology* by T. F. O'Rahilly. Dublin 1946. |
| *Geirfa* | *Geirfa Barddoniaeth Gynnar Gymraeg*, J. Lloyd-Jones. Caerdydd, 1931-. |
| *Heldensage* | *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert* by Rudolf Thurneysen. Halle a. S., 1921. |
| LBL | *Yellow Book of Lecan.* |
| LL | *The Book of Leinster.* |
| LU | *Lebor na hUidre.* |
| *Math* | *Math vab Mathonwy, an inquiry into the . . . Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion* by W. J. Gruffydd. Cardiff, 1928. |
| RC | *Revue Celtique.* Paris, 1870-. |
| RM | *The text of the Mabinogion . . . . from the Red Book of Hergest* ed. J. Rhŷs and J. G. Evans. Oxford, 1887. |
| *Scéla M.M.D.* | *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* ed. Rudolf Thurneysen. Dublin, 1935. |
| TBC | *Táin Bó Cuailnge.* |
| TBDD | *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* ed. Eleanor Knott. Dublin, 1936. |
| WM | *The White Book Mabinogion* ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans. Pwllheli, 1907. |
| ZCP | *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie.* Halle, 1897-. |

# I

## THE QUESTION OF IRISH BORROWINGS

STUDENTS of Celtic literature are agreed that the *Mabinogi* has been influenced in its forms and content by Irish literature and tradition. Where disagreement occurs it is in regard to the actual extent of that influence, and here there is considerable room for difference of opinion. The nature of the comparison involved tends to make any argument based upon it largely a matter of inference, a theory to be asserted or rejected on the grounds of general probability, but impossible to prove or disprove by the use of definite and conclusive evidence. The main difficulty in this connection is the almost total lack of relevant Welsh material deriving from the centuries preceding the composition of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*. This vacuum in Welsh literature is impossible to ignore, if only because of its inconvenience, and in consequence one tends instinctively to adopt an attitude towards it which is not necessarily based on evidence or argument ; one may suppose that there was not very much literature of this type in any case and that this paucity is reflected by the vacuum in extant material, or else one may assume that Welsh possessed during those earlier centuries a *richesse* of literature and literary tradition comparable to those of Irish, and that every name and obscure allusion in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the *Four Branches* and later prose and metrical texts automatically refers back to a lost tale or a vanished tradition. I mention these two possible attitudes because of their importance for the question of the *Mabinogi*'s Irish associations ; one leads to accepting Irish origins for Welsh material without sufficient reason, the other to minimizing Irish influence on the grounds that material which might appear to have been borrowed really derives from earlier Welsh forms which have now disappeared.

It is easy then to appreciate how, for example, W. J. Gruffydd came to diverge so significantly from Sir John Morris-Jones[1] on the question of Irish borrowings. Both had good reasons for holding the opinions they did, but, after reading their work, I cannot help feeling that their views were also conditioned to some extent by their preconceived attitude towards the problem of vacuum in pre-*Mabinogi* Welsh literature. For instance when Sir John Morris-Jones says in his *Taliesin*, 'But why all this assumption of borrowing? It rests on the perfectly gratuituous supposition that the British had no traditional lore of their own,' he should know that this is not true. He is in fact forcing his side of the argument by seeking to set the whole case for Irish borrowings in an ill light. Even when he admits that the *Mabinogi* presumably contains elements which have been borrowed 'from Irish and other sources,' he robs the admission of much of its significance by stating in the next sentence that certain allusions in the Taliesin poems 'are not to the Mabinogion, but to more primitive versions of the stories with many details now lost,' and thereby hinting that these earlier versions were free from Irish influence. Much of what he wrote on the question was undoubtedly true in principle, but he was excessively wary and sceptical and as a result failed to, or chose not to, come to grips with this far-reaching and complicated problem.

Conversely, one of the chief merits in Gruffydd's highly Goidelic interpretation of the Four Branches is precisely that it faces up to the difficulties inherent in the apparent connections between Welsh and Irish tales, and seeks to include their solution within the limits of its conclusions. Some will agree that he was too ready to see a borrowing where there might have been mere correspondence, or even accidental similarity, and that generally his use of evidence was suspect ; but the fact remains that many of the principal points in his analysis of the part of the *Mabinogi* which

[1] Cf. *Taliesin*, p. 238 ff.

he did investigate in detail tend to be confirmed by contemporary and subsequent research. Yet, even were we to reject out of hand all his assumptions of borrowings from Irish, his comparison of the Welsh and Irish tales and resulting conclusions would be none the less important, because, whether they themselves be native or borrowed, the prototypes of many of the Welsh tales can be visualized *only* through the Irish examples.

The foregoing comments on the difficulties besetting the problem of the *Mabinogi*'s Irish connections are intended partly as a justification for the present study. One respect in which *Branwen* differs from the other Branches of the *Mabinogi* is precisely that its Irish associations are so blatant. It contains three passages evidently based upon borrowings from Irish literature, and, as I hope to show by further examination, it has a number of less apparent Irish elements. In the other Branches it is for the most part a question of story-patterns and traditions which can be prised free from their enveloping narrative only with great difficulty, and with considerable uncertainty, but in *Branwen* we have to do largely with incidents, characters and objects which may be considered without recourse to lost literature and inferred tradition, and, not only with these, but with the very style and manner of the story-teller's narrative. Consequently, the investigation of *Branwen*'s Irish associations commences with advantages which would be lacking in the case of the other Branches of the *Mabinogi*. On the other hand, if we can come to certain definite conclusions with regard to this tale, it may be hoped that these will in turn throw some light on the composition of the remaining Branches and on the question of Irish-Welsh literary relations in general.

W. J. Gruffydd had in mind to do a study of *Branwen* and it is unfortunate that he never came to complete it. It would have been a much lighter task to criticize his conclusions than to attempt to replace them. He did however, in scattered references here and there, give some idea of his approach to the text.

In *Math* he suggested that the original Second Branch

was possibly 'something very different from *Branwen*, and that *Branwen* ousted it from the scheme, as they could not both be kept, the number of the Branches being traditionally four.' In fact, he went on, the original Second Branch probably dealt with the youthful exploits of Pryderi (i.e. his *macgnímartha*), thus constituting one of the four tales dealing with the life of this hero. Later the *Exploits of the Children of Llŷr* was added to the series, and to this appendix were further added the various tales found in *Branwen*, such as that of the Iron House. Next there was inserted a version of the *Calumniated Wife* story ; and finally this whole conflated narrative completely ousted the original Second Branch. To sum up, the new material comprises the *Exploits of the Children of Llŷr*, later additions such as the *Iron House* (and possibly the Otherworld description), and the *Calumniated Wife* theme.[1]

Later, in *Rhiannon*, Gruffydd came to qualify his statement that the original Second Branch had been completely displaced and suggested that '*Branwen* contains hidden under the surface a garbled account of his traditionally great feat (elsewhere he describes it as 'the basic myth of *Branwen*'), namely the Expedition to the Other-world, and his snatching from Pen Annwvn, the Chief of the Other-world, his Cauldron of Resurrection.' The outstanding characteristic of the existing Second Branch, i.e. *Branwen*, is the 'excessively large number of 'loose ends' in the narrative and a vast amount of incoherence and confusion. In other words, the author or the cyvarwydd is dealing with material which has undergone little of the 'ironing-out' process, as compared with the equally complex material of *Math*, for instance.'[2]

This reiteration of Gruffydd's percipient comments will have given the reader some idea of the stage at which the study of *Branwen* now stands. I shall defer my own comments on his views until I have examined the possible Irish associations, for the only points on which I might dare

[1] op. cit., p. 326 ff.

[2] op. cit., pp. 11, 14, 62.

to criticize his theories with any assurance are those arising directly or indirectly from the study of Irish literary material.

Before discussing these associations it may be as well to notice briefly the several ways in which correspondences between Welsh and Irish literature may be explained :

i. They may derive from a common Celtic store of tradition.

ii. They may be the result of borrowings from Welsh, or British tradition, by the Irish ; but, while this must be an important consideration in any extensive study of British and Irish literary relations, it will scarcely enter into the course of the present investigation which will be almost entirely concerned with borrowings from Irish to Welsh.

iii. They may be due to the transmission of Irish tradition to Wales first of all via the peoples of Irish origin in Dyfed and Gwynedd, the twin cradles of the Four Branches. Assuming that these populations were Goidelic speaking,[1] the general view is that they were completely merged linguistically with the British population at a comparatively early date, say at the very latest by the latter half of the eighth century, but W. J. Gruffydd in his *Math*

[1] I am alluding in particular to O'Rahilly's theory that the Goidelic invasion of Ireland took place ' not long before 50 B.C. ', that the Goidels found there before them a P-Celtic speaking population, and that ' a Brittonic dialect continued to be spoken by sections of the people down to the seventh century, if not later ' (EIHM p. 207 ff.). This is difficult to reconcile with what we know of the Irish settlements in Wales. For example, the Déisi of Co. Waterford who emigrated to south-west Wales about the end of the third century and set up a dynasty there, belonged to the pre-Goidelic people called the Érainn and presumably their speech was originally P-Celtic ; yet, it is impossible to dissociate them from the striking concentration in south-west Wales of Ogam stones whose inscriptions represent, of course, a primitive form of Irish or Gaelic (cf. Jackson, *Lang. and Hist.*, pp. 151 ff., 170-6: also E. G. Bowen, *Settlements of the Celt. Saints in Wales*, pp. 99-101, where he seeks to harmonize the existence of a substantial Goidelic-speaking population in the southern area with the general pattern of development of the early Celtic Church in Wales). In any case, it would be misleading to carry out an investigation of stories and traditions on the basis of linguistic demarcations. There is not the slighest doubt that many of the tales found in Irish literature from the time it began to be written down originated among non-Goidelic peoples in Ireland, and even if some of these people did emigrate to Britain before being Goidelicized and brought with them tales which eventually became part of Welsh tradition, the fact that they had been narrated in P-Celtic does not alter the more relevant fact that they were transmitted from Ireland to Wales. Admittedly one might the more easily argue common origins for certain traditions, but that explanation would still be subject to the normal reservations.

went so far as to suggest that some Irish was spoken in Gwynedd up to the time of the early Gogynfeirdd. This opinion seems to have been ignored by other scholars.[1]

iv. We can be certain that many themes and traditions were transmitted from the Irish to the British by way of Dál Riata and Strathclyde. The amount of evidence for a traffic of ideas by this route is already considerable and tends to increase. I shall mention only the Irish cycle of Suibne Geilt ('Suibne the Madman'), which has been traced back to origins in British Strathclyde,[2] and the story of Tristan, of which so many of the constituent elements are paralleled in early Irish literature.[3] It is true that the seventh century was the period in which this northern commerce of culture between Ireland and Britain was at its peak, and that the first half of this century saw the breaking of land communications between Wales and the north, but even afterwards there appear to have been close cultural relations between Gwynedd and the north, particularly between the rulers of Gwynedd and the land of their origin.[4]

v. Even if we reject Gruffydd's dubious extension of the life of Gaelic speech in Wales, we may in any case presume a considerable amount of borrowing from Irish tradition as a result of intercourse between the two countries in the three or four centuries preceeding the composition of the Four Branches. Many types of people must have been involved, settlers, fugitives, travellers, pilgrims, etc., proceeding in both directions across the Irish sea. We might recall the case of Aldfrith, King of Northumbria

[1] In the episode concerning Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid in *Branwen* (cf. p. 38 inf.) we are told that he escaped to Britain and that he and his offspring were quartered by Bendigeidfran throughout his domain and became numerous and prospered everywhere. This is generally assumed to allude to Irish settlements in Wales, but its exact significance for eleventh century Wales is by no means clear ; it is possible, as suggested by Anwyl (ZCP III, 133-4), that the author had in mind the place-names which contain the word *Gwyddel*.

[2] K. Jackson, *Féil-Sgribhinn Eóin Mhic Néill*, p. 535 ff. ; J. Carney, *Studies in Early Irish Literature*, p. 129 ff.

[3] See Gertrude Schoepperle, *Tristan and Isolt*.

[4] Cf. Rachel Bromwich, *Studies in Early British History*, ed. Nora K. Chadwick, p. 91 f.

during the years 685-705. His mother was Irish and he received much of his education amongst the Gaels. In fact, so prominent did he become in Irish tradition that he was re-named Flann Fína and had certain poems and collections of wise sayings attributed to him.[1] It has also been suggested that he was instrumental in bringing about the composition of *Beowulf*.[2] Are we to suppose that he had not parallels among the Welsh, who may have left less of an impression on the Irish consciousness simply because they were more commonplace? But undoubtedly the principal channels by which Irish tales and traditions might have reached Wales during the centuries in question were those linking the monastic foundations of the two countries. It is unnecessary to dwell on this subject, for it has been treated at length by others, notably by Miss O'Rahilly[3] and C. H. Slover,[4] but it is well to keep in mind the part played by the monasteries in the preservation and development of early Irish secular literature. Almost all of it passed through the hands of monastic scribes and without any doubt a considerable proportion of it, apart entirely from didactic and religious works, must be attributed to members of monastic communities in the first place. It follows almost inevitably that cultural relations between Welsh and Irish monasteries were accompanied by some exchange of secular literature.

[1] R. M. Smith, *Speculum* II, 432-4 ; RC XLVII, 32 f. ; Vernam E. Hull, *Speculum* IV, 95-102.

[2] A. S. Cook, 'The Possible Begetter of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Widsith*,' *Trans. of the Connecticut Acad.* XXV, 281 ff.

[3] *Ireland and Wales*, especially p. 52 ff.

[4] 'Early Literary Channels between Ireland and Britain,' *Studies in English, no.* 7 (*Univ. of Texas Bulletin*), p. 5 ff.

## II

## AN OUTLINE OF THE SECOND BRANCH

FOR the benefit of the reader who may not have a copy of *Branwen* by him, I thought it advisable to include a synopsis of the tale. In this synopsis I have noted the more obvious divisions in its narrative, for, even before we subject the text to a detailed investigation, we can see that its unity is impaired by several imperfectly concealed joints and that the variety of some of its episodes bears testimony to the fact that its writer drew upon a number of different sources for this material. The substance of the story is as follows :

Bendigeidfran son of Llŷr was crowned king over the island of Britain. One afternoon he was at Harddlech in Ardudwy in the company of his brother Manawydan and two brothers on his mother's side, Nisien and Efnisien, and other noblemen as well. Nisien and Efnisien were sons of Euroswydd by Penarddun, mother of Bendigeidfran and daughter of Beli son of Mynogan. Of the two brothers the latter was given to causing strife, the former to restoring peace.

As they were seated on the rock at Harddlech, they saw thirteen ships coming from the South of Ireland. The king sent his men to go and see what their intent was. Meanwhile, one of the ships outstripped the others, and put out boats which came towards the land. They greeted the king, who could hear them from his position on the rock above them. They said it was Matholwch king of Ireland who had come to seek the hand of Branwen, sister of Bendigeidfran. He was invited ashore to take counsel on the matter, and following their taking counsel it was determined to bestow Branwen upon the Irish king. 'And she was one of the Three Matriarchs of this Island. Fairest maiden in the world was she.'

A time was appointed when Matholwch should

sleep with her in Aberffraw, and they set out on their way there, Matholwch and his hosts in their ships and Bendigeidfran and his hosts by land. At Aberffraw they began the feast. They were not within a house, but within tents, for Bendigeidfran had never been contained within a house. The entertainment continued until they were weary and felt the need of sleep. And that night Matholwch slept with Branwen.

As we shall see presently when we read further in the tale, the next part of the text appears to have been altered or re-arranged to make room for an onomastic tale explaining the place-name *Talebolion.* The abrupt and inconsequential nature of the opening and closing passages of this episode strongly suggests that there has been some tampering with the narrative.

On the morrow the officers of the court set about billeting the horses and the grooms, and subsequently it came about one day that the quarrelsome Efnisien happened upon the billets of Matholwch's horses. He was told whose they were, and also that the king of Ireland had slept with Branwen. He was enraged that his sister should thus have been bestowed without his consent, and thereupon he set to mutilating Matholwch's horses, till they were rendered useless.

When the latter heard of this insult he decided to leave forthwith for Ireland, but when Bendigeidfran learned of his intent he sent messengers to find out the reasons for this hurried departure. Eventually Matholwch was persuaded to stay, after it had been explained to him that Bendigeidfran was in no way answerable for the wrong done to him and that he would receive ample atonement in the form of gold and silver, as well as sound horses for those maimed.

And so they arranged the pavilions and the tents once again, and ' as they began to sit at the beginning of the feast, so sat they then.' In the course of the feast, however, Bendigeidfran noticed that his guest appeared sad and listless, and, thinking it was because he did not deem his reparation sufficient, promised to

increase it to his satisfaction. Moreover, he would receive the horses on the morrow and, in addition, a cauldron possessed of a wonderful virtue : if a slain man were cast into it to-day, by the following day he would be restored to life, save that he would no longer have the power of speech. By this largesse was Matholwch made happy and joyful.

'And on the morrow his horses were made over to him as long as tamed horses lasted. And then they journeyed with him into another commot, and colts were made over to him until his tally was completed. And for that reason the name Talebolion was henceforth given to that commot.'

Next we have a minor story telling of the Iron House in Ireland. It has little more than a superficial connection with its context.

When they were sitting together the second night, Matholwch asked where Bendigeidfran had obtained the cauldron. The latter said it had been given to him by a certain Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid, who had come to Britain with his wife Cymidei Cymeinfoll after escaping from the Iron House in Ireland. It would be surprising if Matholwch did not know of that. Matholwch did in fact know of it and he now recalled the events in question. One day he was hunting on a mound overlooking a lake called the Lake of the Cauldron when he saw emerging from the water a monstrous man of evil appearance carrying a cauldron on his back and accompanied by a woman who was even twice as big as he. The king took them with him to maintain and support them. They were with him for a year, during which time all went well ; but from then on things were different, and by the end of the fourth month they had made themselves hated on account of the outrages they committed. The people rose against the king and bade him choose between the kingship and the monstrous couple. In the end it was decided to get rid of them by enticing them into a trap. A chamber

was constructed of iron and all the smiths of Ireland came and had charcoal piled high around it. Then the couple were served with meat and drink within the chamber, and, when they and their offspring were seen to be drunk, the charcoal was lighted, and the fire was encouraged by bellows placed around the house. Those inside waited until the iron wall of the house was white-hot and then the husband charged the wall with his shoulder and burst it before him. He was followed by his wife, and none escaped save them.

It was then that they came to Britain bringing with them the cauldron. Bendigeidfran quartered them (i.e. with their abundant offspring) throughout his kingdom, and they were numerous and prosperous and fortified the land with men and arms.

After this interlude the central narrative of the tale is resumed.

When the period of feasting had come to an end Matholwch set out for Ireland with Branwen. There they were received with great joy. For a year Branwen held a position of honour and renown among the Irish, and meantime it came to pass that she grew pregnant and in due time gave birth to a son. He was named Gwern son of Matholwch. In the second year, however, the people began to complain on account of the insult suffered by Matholwch in Wales, and there was an uprising which compelled the king to avenge the disgrace. Branwen was excluded from his chamber and forced to work in the court, and the butcher was made to give her a box on the ear every day after he had been cutting up meat. A ban was set on traffic from Ireland to Wales and those who came from Wales were imprisoned lest news of Branwen's humiliation should reach that country.

For some three years Branwen bore with her ill-treatment. But meantime she reared a starling at the end of her kneading-trough and taught it human language and instructed it how to recognize her

brothers. Finally she fastened under the bird's wings a letter telling of her plight and sent it towards Wales. It came to rest on Bendigeidfran's shoulder while he was in an assembly at Caer Seint in Arfon.

When Branwen's message became known to Bendigeidfran, he had summoned to him the full levy of the sevenscore and fourteen districts in the island of Britain. Their counsel was to set out for Ireland and leave behind them seven men as overlords. These men were left in Edeirnon ; and consequently the name Seith Marchawg was given to the township. Their leader was Cradawg son of Brân.

The next section begins with an allusion to the inundation of the land then under the Irish Sea. We are told that Bendigeidfran, with his musicians on his back, waded from Britain to Ireland ; for at that time there were only two rivers called the Lli and the Archan, but later the sea overflowed the kingdoms. This is followed by a fantastic description of Bendigeidfran as seen by the swineherds of Matholwch. It is obviously of Irish origin and is cited later in this study.

When the Irish learned who was approaching they took counsel, and their decision was to retreat beyond the river Llinon and break down the bridge across it. When Bendigeidfran arrived there, the bridge was gone and he learned that there were loadstones at the bottom of the river which prevented any vessel from crossing. The difficulty was resolved by him laying his body from one side to the other, and having hurdles placed upon it over which the hosts passed. When they crossed, they were met by messengers from Matholwch assuring them of his good will. He intended, they said, giving the kingship of Ireland to his son, Gwern, Bendigeidfran's nephew, and would invest him in the latter's presence. The king of the Britons was soothed but not satisfied, and he sent messengers back for better terms.

Here opens what might fairly be called the central part of the tale—the building of the house for Bendigeidfran and

the fight between the Britons and Irish. It will be noticed that the building of the house is not very convincingly motivated; the real concession to Bendigeidfran was Matholwch's submission and his abdication in favour of Gwern.

The Irish king and his advisers knew that Bendigeidfran had never been contained in a house; so they decided to build one which would accommodate him and his host in one half and Matholwch and his men in the other. These terms were agreed to and the house was built. But the Irish planned treachery. They fixed a peg on either side of each of the hundred pillars within the house and on each peg they hung a hide bag in which an armed man lay concealed. The first of the men of the Island of the Mighty to enter was Efnisien, and he immediately noticed the bags. He asked one of the Irish what was in the nearest bag and was told it contained flour. He felt about with his fingers till he came to the warrior's head and then he pressed till his fingers sank into the brain. So he did with the other bags, one by one, until of the two hundred men only one remained alive. This warrior wore armour about his head, but Efnisien killed him as he had killed the others whereupon he uttered an *englyn* punning on the word *blawt*, 'flour.'

Then the hosts came into the house and ranged themselves on both sides. There was immediate concord between them, and the kingship was conferred upon Gwern, who then went to Bendigeidfran, and afterwards to Manawydan and Nisien. Efnisien asked why the boy did not come to him, and Bendigeidfran said he would of course come. But as he approached, Efnisien seized him and, holding him by the feet, thrust him into the blazing fire. Branwen made as if to leap into the fire after her son but was restrained by Bendigeidfran. Fierce fighting broke out throughout the house, and it was then that Morddwyd Tyllion said: 'Dogs of Gwern, beware of Morddwyd Tyllion.'

There follows a passage telling of the cauldron of revivification.

> The Irish kindled a fire under the cauldron, and the dead bodies were thrown into it so that they might arise on the morrow as good fighting men as ever. When Efnisien saw this and perceived that there was no room for the bodies of the Britons, he began to feel shame and remorse. He crept in among the Irish corpses, was thrown into the cauldron, and then stretched himself out within it, so that it burst into four pieces. His heart burst with it.

At this point commences the account of the return to Britain and the journey to London with the head of Bendigeidfran by way of the Otherworld.

> In spite of Efnisien's action the victory of the men of Britain was a poor one. Only seven men escaped with Bendigeidfran, who was wounded in the foot with a poisoned spear. These seven included Pryderi, Manawydan and Taliesin. Then Bendigeidfran ordered his companions to strike off his head and bring it to the White Mount in London, where they were to bury it with its face towards France. They would, he told them, be a long time on the road. For seven years they would be feasting in Harddlech, with the birds of Rhiannon singing to them. His head would be as pleasant company as it had ever been when joined to his body. Then they would be at Gwales in Penfro for four score years, and the head with them uncorrupted, until the day they would open the door towards Aber Henfelen. Then they would have to make for London.
>
> And so they cut off Bendigeidfran's head and set out for Britain. Branwen accompanied them, but, when they landed at Aber Alaw in Talebolion, she looked on Ireland and the Island of the Mighty and grieved that they should have been left barren and empty because of her. She gave a great sigh and her heart broke, and there, on the bank of the Alaw, a four-sided grave was made for her.

> The seven survivors went on their way to Harddlech. They met a group of men and women who informed them that Caswallawn son of Beli had conquered the Island of the Mighty and was king in London. He had donned a magic mantle which made him invisible, so that he was able to slay the six companions of Cradawg son of Brân, while none saw who wielded the sword. Cradawg broke his heart at seeing the mysterious death of his friends.

The text proceeds to tell of the sojourn of the seven survivors at Harddlech and Gwales as had been foretold by Bendigeidfran.

> Finally, after the fourscore years in Gwales, which did not seem such a time to them, one of their number, Heilyn, son of Gwyn, wished to know whether what he had heard of the forbidden door was true, and he opened it and looked on Cornwall and Aber Henfelen. Immediately their old sorrows and cares returned, and they could no longer rest, but must set out with the head towards London. They at length arrived there and buried the head. Its burial was one of the Three Happy Concealments and its disclosure one of the three Unhappy Disclosures, for no oppression would ever come across the sea so long as the head was concealed there. 'And that is what the tale says. That is their adventure, the men who set forth from Ireland.'

Then comes a sort of epilogue to the story of the fight in Ireland. It is patently an addition or an afterthought.

> In Ireland no one was left alive except five pregnant women in a cave in the Irish wilderness. These bore five sons at the same time. When the sons had grown up, they slept each with the other's mother, and they ruled the country and divided it amongst them. And in that division originated the five provinces of Ireland.

The text is then closed by a long composite title purporting to name the different sections of this branch of the *Mabinogi*. I quote it in full later.

## III

## THE OBVIOUS BORROWINGS FROM IRISH

I MENTIONED above that *Branwen* contains three passages which are obviously based on borrowings from Irish literature. These have been long recognized as being of Irish origin and are quoted at length in Miss O'Rahilly's *Ireland and Wales.*[1] In this present study, I hope to establish beyond reasonable doubt that there are other elements of the *Branwen* narrative which derive from Irish and which show that its author was more dependent on Irish material than has hitherto been thought to be the case. I shall, however, commence by discussing afresh the three passages whose provenance is least doubtful. Since it is hoped that the general investigation of sources will be of interest to students who are not closely familiar with Irish literature, I have provided it with a fairly full documentation.

### 1. *The Iron House*

The most striking and probably the best known of *Branwen's* supposed Irish borrowings is the theme of the Iron House. This tells how certain enemies are inveigled inside a building made of iron and then served with an abundance of food and drink to dull their senses and suspicions, whereupon the iron house is closed and heated with huge fires in order to bring about the destruction of those inside. The similarities between the Irish versions and the Welsh are obvious, as the reader can see by comparing the relevant passages. The Welsh version is as follows :

> And then, in this strait, they decided to make a chamber all of iron. And when the chamber was ready, every smith that was in Ireland was summoned there, each and every possessor of tongs and hammer. And they caused charcoal to be piled as high as the

[1] op. cit., p. 106 ff.

> top of the chamber, and they had the woman and her husband and her offspring served with ample meat and drink. And when it was known that they were drunk, they began to set fire to the charcoal against the chamber, and to blow the bellows which had been placed around the house with a man to each pair of bellows, and they began to blow the bellows till the house was white-hot around them. Then they held a council there in the middle of the chamber floor. And he waited till the iron-wall was white, and by reason of the exceeding great heat he charged the wall with his shoulder and broke it out before him, and his wife after him. And none escaped thence save him and his wife.[1]

The first of the Irish accounts occurs in *Orgain Denna Ríg* ('The Destruction of Dinn Ríg'),[2] a text belonging to the ninth or early tenth century. The legend of which it is a version is extremely old, for it deals with the origins of the Lagin, whose name became that of the south-eastern province, Leinster. There are various scattered materials relating to it which extend back to the seventh century, but as far as we can judge from these, the complete legend to which they refer does not seem to have contained the Iron House, but simply the more conventional treacherous attack. The object of this attack, in whatever terms it may have been described, was the killing of Cobthach Coel by Labraid Loingsech in revenge for the murder of his father and grandfather. It is related as follows in *Orgain Denna Ríg*:

> He then invited Cobthach in order to provide for him hospitality and entertainment. He had a house built specially for Cobthach. It was a very strong house indeed, for it was made of iron, walls and floors and doors. The Leinstermen were a full year building

[1] This and other quotations in English from the *Mabinogi* are taken from the trans. by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, as are the forms of personal names.

[2] Ed., with translation, ZCP III, 1-14; without translation, by David Greene, *Fingal Rónáin and other stories*, p. 16 ff. For a summary see Dillon, *The Cycle of the Kings*. p. 4 ff.

it, and neither did father disclose it to son or mother to daughter. Thence is the proverb, 'Every Leinsterman has his secret.' It was in Dinn Ríg that the house was built. Cobthach was then invited to the feast and came with a retinue of thirty of the kings of Ireland. However, Cobthach could not be prevailed upon to go into the house till Labraid's mother and his jester should go before him. The jester chose the Leinstermen's blessing and the freedom (honour) of his descendants for ever ; it was for the benefit of her son the woman went. Labraid himself waited on them . . . 'Fire will be brought to you in the house, and food and drink,' said he. 'That is fitting,' said Cobthach. He had nine men on the floor of the house. They pulled after them the chain that was attached to the door and fixed it to the pillar in the entrance to the house. The thrice fifty smith's bellows, which they had around the house, were blown till it became hot for the host inside. 'Your mother is yonder, Labraid,' said the warriors. 'No, my son,' she cried, 'preserve your honour through me, for I shall die in any case.' Cobthach Coel is slain there with seven hundred men and thirty kings.

The tale which contains the second Irish version provides a good illustration of the fortuitous manner in which early Irish texts were sometimes preserved—or lost. *Mesca Ulad* ('The Intoxication of the Ulstermen') is preserved in two primary manuscripts, LL and LU, but not in its entirety in either. LL preserves the earlier part of the tale, LU the latter, but, fortunately for our purpose, there is a little overlapping. The version represented by LU may belong to the eighth century, while that of LL belongs to approximately the first quarter of the twelfth. It is towards the end of the latter fragment that the story-teller relates how their enemies sought to kill King Conchobar and his Ulster warriors in the Iron House :

'Long has their coming been in prophecy, and preparation has been made for them. The preparation is a house of iron and two houses of boards about it and an earthen house below beneath it and a firm-set

slab of iron thereupon ; and all that could be found of faggots and firewood and coal has been gathered into the earthen house, so that it is quite full. This is what has been foretold to us, that the nobles of Ulster would gather on the same night in that house. There are seven chains of fresh iron here under the legs of this bed as a preparation for binding and closing in ; they are to be made fast to the seven pillars that are outside upon this green . . .'

Messengers were sent to them to tell them that the best warrior of the Ulstermen was to make his choice of a house for them. A . . . contention arose among the Ulstermen about that. A hundred warriors of them, of like valour, arose simultaneously and went to their weapons, until Sencha son of Ailill pacified them.

' Let Cú Chulainn go there,' said Sencha ; ' for the sake of his house have you come ; and be ye under his protection until he returns to it.'

Cú Chulainn arose. The men of Ulster arose as one man after Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn looked at the largest house that was in the stead. That was the iron house about which were the two houses of boards.

There came servants to attend to them, and a huge pile of a fire was lit for them. Choice portions of food and of drink were dispensed to them. As night drew on, their servants and attendants one by one stole away from them until the last : he shut the door behind him. The seven chains of fresh iron were put upon the house and made fast to the seven stone pillars that were outside on the green. Thrice fifty smiths with their smith's bellows were brought to stimulate the fire. Three circles of them were set about the house. The fire was kindled from below and from above into the house, so that the fierce heat of the fire came through the house from below. The host shouted loudly about the house, and the men of Ulster fell silent and mute. And Bricriu said : ' O men of Ulster, what is the intense heat that is seizing

our feet? But a whisper is clearer to me than a shout to another : me thinks we are being burned from below and from above, and the house is closed upon us.'

'There shall be a shift whereby we shall find out,' said Triscatail the Strong Man, rising and giving a blow with his foot upon the door-valve of fresh iron that was against the doorway. The door did not creak nor groan nor bend.

'Not well hast thou made thy feast for the men of Ulster, O Cú Chulainn,' said Bricriu ; 'thou hast brought them into an enemy's den.'

'Say not so, O Bricriu,' said Cú Chulainn. 'I will do with my Cruadín a deed through which all the men of Ulster shall go out.'

Cú Chulainn thrust his sword so that it went up to the hilt through the iron house and through the two houses of boards.

'This is a house of iron,' said Cú Chulainn, 'between two houses of boards.'

Quoth Bricriu, 'That is worse than every trick! . . .'[1]

The extant portion of the earlier LU text begins a little before the point where the Ulstermen are introduced into the house prepared for them. But this account varies considerably from that of LL. The Ulster warriors are enclosed in a stout oak house 'with vaulted roof, having a door of yew three full foot thick, in which were two hooks of iron, and an iron bolt through these two hooks.' From this they eventually escape to give battle to their attackers. Thus the house is not of iron nor is there any mention of setting fire to it. The position is therefore that *Mesca Ulad* provides no tangible evidence of the Iron House theme before the beginning of the twelfth century.

The last version occurs in the *Bórama*, a framework story purporting to give an historical account of a tribute levied for centuries on the Leinstermen by the kings of Tara at

[1] The translation above is from that of J. C. Watson, *Scott. Gaelic Studies* V, 1 ff. The passage in question begins at l.807 of the edited text of *Mesca Ulad* also by Watson. In accordance with this I have made one or two slight alterations in the translation.

the cost of many a battle. In its present form it probably belongs to the tenth or eleventh century, although some of the materials it contains are older. This is how it introduces the burning :

> Aed mac Ainmirech took the kingship of Ireland. Aed's sons were Domhnall, Maelcoba the cleric, Gabhrán and Cumascach. This Cumascach came to speak to his father, and said to him: 'I desire to make 'a stripling's free circuit of Ireland,' and the wife of every king in Ireland shall pass a night with me.' He set out therefore on a free circuit of Ireland and so arrived from across the Rige, making for Leinster. His strength was four battalions. The king of Leinster at that time was Brandub, son of Eochu, son of Muiredach, son of Oengus Brugach, son of Feidlimid, son of Énna Cennselach. Then Brandub was told that the king of Ireland's son, on free circuit, was on his way to him, and said: 'Let messengers meet them ; and tell them that I am not here, but have gone to Britain to levy tax and tribute. Have them billeted through the country from the Boyne to the Inneoin, and let every man slay him who is quartered on him. Let Cumascach himself, having with him three hundred sons of kings, come to me and I will give him my wife just as the kings of the other provinces have done.' The billeting was duly carried out, and the fourth battalion of them came to Brandub's residence in Belach Dubthaire, which today is called Belach Conghlais. Then Cumascach pitched on the green of the stead. People came to look after him, and they were all lodged in one house . . .
>
> Then it was that Brandub said to Oengus son of Airmedach : 'Let us have a barrow filled and taken to the king of Ireland's son.' So it was done and the two kings, Brandub[1] and Oengus, after hoisting the barrow on them, bore it laboriously into Cumascach's presence. They came out again and shut behind them

[1] Brandub is disguised as a slave.

> the huge door of the royal house (for in either man of the two was the strength of nine). Thereafter four fires were set to the house, one to every side, and it was then that Cumascach said, 'Who is attacking the house?' 'I!' said Brandub; and then it was that Glasdámh the lampooner cried: 'Let not a deed of treachery be wrought upon me, for I have eaten of your food.' 'It shall not,' said Brandub. 'Climb up the house and leap over the ridgepole. Leap out over the top of the flames and you shall be safe as far as we are concerned.' 'Cumascach,' said the jester, 'you hear that. Put on my apparel and go out!' In such guise Cumascach went out, and was severely injured. He made his way feebly to Monaid Cumascaig by the green of Cill Rannairech. There it was that Lóchíne Lonn, grandson of Lonán, and Erenagh of Cill Rannairech, happened upon him, and, so soon as Cumascach had declared himself to him, struck off his head. And he took it to where Brandub was, and showed it to him. It was for that reason that exemption was granted to Cill Rannairech.[1]

Now, the reader will have noticed that it is not quite accurate to cite this passage as an instance of the Iron House theme, for in fact we are not told that the house is constructed of iron. It is otherwise quite close to the versions quoted already, and it is just barely possible that the omission of the Iron House is merely accidental, since minor elements are freely added to or omitted from the different recensions of framework stories of the type of the *Bórama*. But, even if we reject this possibility, the passage still has its importance as providing an instance of the type of tale which was the immediate forerunner of the Iron House theme.

As far as textual evidence goes, there is none to show that the Iron House theme existed before the ninth or tenth century in Irish literature, but of course that is not proof that it did not, nor that it was first employed by the writer

[1] Ed. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* I, 370-2; II, 408-10; Stokes, RC XIII, 54-60.

of *Orgain Denna Rîg*. That it was borrowed from Irish by the author of *Branwen*, there can be little doubt, not only because what roots it has are in Irish literature, but also because this is implicit in the Welsh text, which locates the Iron House and the related events in Ireland and presents the tale from the lips of Matholwch, king of Ireland. The matter is clinched by the words of Bendigeidfran, who refers to the incident and adds, 'And it is a marvel to me if thou knowest nothing of that.' The implied comment is 'You are an Irishman ; you ought to know this story better than I.'[1] There would appear to be little point in seeking to discover the actual source of the *Branwen* episode. If we are to judge from the dating of the two Irish versions, then *Orgain Denna Rîg* must have been the source, but then we cannot preclude the possibility that other versions of the theme have been lost or that the twelfth century *Mesca Ulad* was based upon an earlier recension containing the Iron House.[2]

[1] In his *Folklore and Myth in the Mabinogion* (p.19), W. J. Gruffydd refers to the *Mesca Ulad* version of the Iron House theme and asserts that 'in this instanee at least, the Welsh version is more primitive than the Irish.' How he arrives at such a conclusion is obvious from another comment in the same lecture : 'It may be suggested that we have here in this episode (i.e. of the Iron House) a confused mixture of the two most important fairy tests, Iron and Fire.' This is one case where I feel that the only possible course is to flatly disagree with Gruffydd. In Irish, as I have already pointed out, the Iron House theme is almost certainly a development of the type of murder by burning exemplified by the *Bóroma* narrative cited above. There is little likelihood of anyone associating this with 'fairy tests,' and still less of their doing so with an annalistic entry like the following in the Annals of Inisfallen *s.a.* 1103 (not very far removed from the date at which *Branwen* was written) : *Tech do loscud for Ua Flainn Ardda in qua ceciderunt multi, 7 mulier eius 7 princeps illius domus* ('A house was burned over Ua Flainn Arda, and many fell therein, including his wife and the master of that house'). One cannot but feel that, in his investigation of the *Mabinogi*, Gruffydd allowed himself to become too preoccupied with this aversion of fairies for iron and fire.

[2] The evidence is meagre and uncertain. It may be noted, for what it is worth, that *Mesca Ulad* speaks of 'thrice fifty smiths with their smith's bellows,' while in *Branwen* 'every smith that was in Ireland was summoned there' ; but in *Orgain Denna Rîg* there is mention only of 'thrice fifty smith's bellows,' not of the smiths. The relationship might have been clearer had the second half of the LL *Mesca Ulad* been preserved, with its account of how the Ulster warriors escaped from the Iron House. In the LU text we are told that Cú Chulainn gave a kick to the door of the oaken prison so that his leg went through it up to his knee and then a second kick which knocked down the lintel of the door. Although his action did not enable them to escape, it is just possible that it might have suggested a means of escape such as is found in *Branwen*.

ii. *The Description of Bendigeidfran*

While Bendigeidfran is on his way to Ireland, as related in *Branwen*, the swineherds of Matholwch, king of Ireland, come with a strange report to their master :

'Lord,' said they, 'we have wondrous news : a forest have we seen upon the deep, in a place where we never saw a single tree . . . a big mountain close to the forest, and that moving, *and a lofty ridge on the mountain, and a lake on each side of the ridge*, and the forest and the mountain and all those things moving.' This unusual sight is interpreted by Branwen : The forest was the masts of ships and their yards ; the mountain Bendigeidfran, coming wading through the water ; *the lofty ridge with the lake on each side of it his nose and eyes as he looked in anger towards Ireland.*

For anyone acquainted with early Irish literature this passage will call to mind immediately a type of exaggerated description which is so common there as to be almost stereotyped. The example closest to that of *Branwen* occurs in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, being a description of Mac Cécht, who figures in the text as the champion of King Conaire Mór and is otherwise fairly prominent in Irish tradition. A party of reivers had landed on the east coast of Ireland and their leader Ingcél, who is referred to in the tale as the king of the Britons' son, goes off to reconnoitre the hostel of Da Derga, where Conaire Mór happened to be staying that night. On returning to his companions he presents a lengthy series of descriptions of the people he saw within the hostel. Amongst his hearers are three foster-brothers of Conaire's who had been banished by him because of their marauding, and now, as Ingcél completes each item in his train of descriptions, one of these, Fer Rogain by name, analyses it and identifies the person described. Only one item concerns us here, and of that I need quote only a part :

'He bore a dun-coloured wooden shield bound with iron . . . At his two smooth sides (?) are two five-benched boats, and each of his two mighty vessels sufficient for three parties of ten . . . Two bald men there by the man with hair. *Two loughs by a mountain* . . . two hides by an oak.

Two small boats near them full of white-thorn spines on a circular board, and there is what seems to me like a slender stream of water on which the sun is shining and its trickle descending from it, and a hide arranged behind him, and a palace housepost in the shape of a great spear above him. A good weight of a plough-yoke in the shaft that is therein.' The subject of this strange description is immediately identified by Fer Rogain :

'It is not difficult for me to liken him. That is Mac Cécht son of Snaide Teichid ; the champion of Conaire son of Eterscél. A great hero is Mac Cécht. Supine he was in his couch, asleep, when you saw him. The two bald men whom you saw by the man with hair, these are his two knees by his head. *The two loughs by a mountain which you saw, these are his two eyes by his nose.* The two hides by a tree which you saw, these are his two ears by his head. The two five-benched boats on a circular board which you saw are his two sandals on his shield. The slender stream of water which you saw on which the sun shines and its trickle descending from it, this is the shimmering of his sword. The hide arranged behind him, that is his sword's scabbard. The palace housepost which you saw, that is his spear.'[1]

Now, considering that the TBDD passage is but one of a common type in early Irish literature, it is reasonable to assume that the brief account in *Branwen* is an adaptation, or a reminiscence, of just such a description. Further, if we regard the Welsh passage a little more closely we can see that it is comprised of three elements, the ships' masts seen as a forest, Bendigeidfran as a mountain, and his nose and eyes as a mountain ridge flanked by two lakes. The last is the most peculiar and most particularized of the three. It is found nowhere else in Welsh literature, and in Irish literature it is paralleled only by the phrases italicized above in the TBDD passage. In view of the exceptional and deliberately fantastic nature of the comparison implied, it is scarcely possible to accept the two instances in Welsh

[1] Ed. Knott, §§ 87-8 ; Stokes (with transl.), RC XXII, 187-9. A convenient translation of TBDD is contained in *Ancient Irish Tales* by Cross and Slover, p. 93 ff.

and Irish as mere coincidence. Instead we must assume that one is derived from the other, and a comparison of the two texts, apart from considerations of chronology, will show that TBDD was the original. For example, the inclusion of the second element of the Welsh description was obviously dictated by the borrowing of the one just discussed. The author decided to include the passage representing Mac Cécht's nose as a mountain ridge and to apply it to Bendigeidfran, but, since the latter was wading upright across the sea, he could not ignore the rest of his huge body. In other words he had to have a mountain as well as a mountain ridge !

But even this alteration did not enable him to achieve a completely satisfactory adaptation of the Irish passage. In TBDD Mac Cécht is described as lying down, so that the prominent outline of his nose projected vertically from its background the same as a mountain does ; in *Branwen* on the other hand, Bendigeidfran was standing upright and looking towards Ireland, so that the mountain ridge which was his nose projected horizontally instead of vertically (for which reason it would not have appeared as a prominent feature to those Irishmen who saw Bendigeidfran looking towards them) and the lakes which were his eyes stood on end. At first glance this might appear a trifling inconsistency, but it is one which the Irish story-teller with all his unrestrained hyperbole would never have been guilty of. Reading TBDD we can see that the writer first of all visualized the recumbent figure of a man and then used it as a basis for his exaggerated description, whereas it is obvious that the author of *Branwen* commenced by borrowing the most striking element of this description and then adapted it as best as he could—but not with complete success—to the somewhat different situation demanded by his own narrative.

The remaining element of the Welsh description is the vision of the ships' masts as a forest, and it need not be emphasized that similes and metaphors in such terms are by no means uncommon. The comparison implied is one which might be employed by a literary story-teller conscious

of his art, just as much in the twentieth century as in the eleventh or twelfth, in order to impress his readers with the size of a fleet of sailing ships[1] ; on the other hand the same could scarcely be said of the remainder of the description containing the suggested borrowing from Irish. In fact, this brief analysis of the content of the passage in the Welsh text would seem to lead to but one conclusion, namely that its author had in mind the description of Mac Cécht in TBDD when he wrote it.[2]

It is significant, moreover, that the similarity between the Welsh and Irish passages is not merely one of content but also of literary technique. The device employed by both is essentially a means of achieving graphic, dramatic narrative and description and may be summarized as follows : One or more persons, with their entourage, approach a group of people. This group includes a person who is already acquainted with those approaching. One of his companions, who knows nothing of them, poses a series of questions, accompanied by the dramatic description, and thus provides the knowledgeable one with an opportunity of speaking about the newcomers.

The earliest known instance of this literary trick is that occurring in the third book of the Iliad, where Priam calls Helen and together they watch the approaching Greek army. Priam, who does not know the Greeks, asks the questions : Helen has associated with them and is therefore in a position to answer. It is suggested that this device was borrowed into Irish literature from Homer.[3] In any

[1] We might compare a passage in *Mesca Ulad* in one of these stock descriptions where an approaching host of men with their weapons is seen as a grove of oak-trees (ed. Watson, l. 369 ff. ; transl. *Scott. Gaelic Studies* V, 12 ff.).

[2] It is generally accepted that TBDD, as it has been preserved, represents a compilation made from two versions of the tale in the course of the eleventh century ; cf. Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 623 ff. Thus the descriptive passage I have cited above falls into two parts deriving from two different versions. The elements apparently borrowed here by *Branwen* occur in the second part (i.e. the part deriving from Thurneysen's version A ; see *Heldensage*, pp. 627, 645), but there is not sufficient internal evidence in this particular case to show clearly that the source of the borrowing must have been one or other of the versions of TBDD, and not the compilation.

[3] Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 11, n. 20 ; Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History*, p. 307. But this derivation is questioned by Gerard Murphy, *Éigse* VIII, 157.

case it seems to have fascinated the early Irish story-tellers (using the term with its wider connotation to include written as well as oral literature). Instances are found outside Irish literature, but nowhere does it appear to have been adopted with the same enthusiasm, and in fact it becomes a regular feature of early Irish narrative.[1]

One can observe it being developed and elaborated within that literature from century to century, and one of these elaborations is reflected in *Branwen.* In the Welsh text the heroine is not one of those waiting and watching the approaching company, and so she has to identify the latter from another's description, just as Fer Rogain identifies Conaire and his companions from Ingcél's account. The earliest instance of this innovation noted in Irish occurs in the story of *Fled Bricrend* (' The Feast of Bricriu '), which may belong to the eighth century, and it is an interesting fact that the interpreter in this tale is a woman, as in *Branwen* (particularly in view of my later suggestion that the writer of *Branwen* was acquainted with this Irish tale). In TBDD there is a variant peculiar to this text, for the observer and the interpreter are made to belong to the approaching group, and not, as is usual, to those waiting. But, in the particular circumstances this change is natural and almost inevitable, since the tale is centred on Conaire and his impending doom, and it is around him, not his attackers, that the story-teller must conjure up an impression of greatness and tragedy.

At all events it is clear that the author of *Branwen* borrowed the technique of the identification scene from Irish literature and, in view of the striking connection between the respective descriptive passages, he must have had the particular version occurring in TBDD foremost in his mind. In fact I think that the connection between *Branwen* and TBDD goes much further than an isolated instance of borrowing, and I hope to show in the course of the remainder of this discussion that the Welsh story-teller was familiar with the whole of TBDD. But, for the

[1] A discussion of the subject, with a collection of instances, is to be found in Carney, op. cit., p. 305 ff.

moment, let us press our examination of the identification incident a little further : In the earlier part of TBDD we are told that Conaire had three foster-brothers (including Fer Rogain) who took to marauding. In consequence they were liable to be put to death, but Conaire was unwilling to kill the companions of his youth and had them banished instead. They then joined forces with a band of marauders led by Ingcél Caech, a Briton, and having bound themselves in honour to him, were obliged to accompany him in his attack on the hostel in which Conaire was staying. Now, when TBDD tells of the original marauding of these three brothers, it describes how they were seen by the swineherd of a certain Maine Milscothach, who had never seen anything like it before. He fled and was pursued by them, but, as he fled, he cried for help, and the three brothers with their followers were taken prisoner and brought to Tara for punishment.[1]

I suggest that this passage occurred to the author of *Branwen* when he was adapting the observer-interpreter device as borrowed from TBDD. Naturally his interpreter could be none other than Branwen herself ; but in seeking a suitable observer he called to mind the earlier episode in TBDD which contained a suitable observer ready to hand in the swineherd of Maine. (It is scarcely necessary to look for an explanation as to why the swineherd has become plural in the Welsh text).[2] Moreover, it is even possible that this part of TBDD has provided the Welsh author with a name for his Irish king. As far as I am aware the name Matholwch is not used of any other character in early Welsh literature, and considering that the author of *Branwen* uses it of an Irish king, it seems reasonably likely that the name was of Irish origin. But, since it does not occur in Irish literature with any obvious approximation to the Welsh

[1] Ed. Knott, § 20 : transl. RC XXII, 29 f. ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 99.

[2] There is a doublet in TBDD to the marauding incident just cited which differs from it substantially. The above version evidently derives from Thurneysen's version A of the complete tale, the doublet from his B (cf. *Heldensage*, p. 625). Therefore if *Branwen* has not borrowed from the conflated recension of TBDD (cf. p. 27 n. 2 supra), it must have borrowed from version A.

form, we might expect an altered form of some Irish name. That brings to mind the (Maine) Milscothach of TBDD. With metathesis in the interior of this name and the not abnormal simplification of the consonant group *lsc*, it comes very close to that in *Branwen*. The reader has only to pronouce the two names one after the other to realize how similar they are. With regard to the vowels it is significant that the one which takes the stress in Welsh remains the same as in Irish. The other two may have been influenced by names like Math and Culhwch with which the Welsh writer was familiar.[1] Finally, it may be noted that there is a parallel between the roles of Matholwch and Maine Milscothach within the limits of the episode discussed above. Both are Irish rulers and both have a swineherd (or swineherds) who observe a sight such as they had never before seen, but which, reduced to basic terms, is that of a hostile force violating or about to violate their lords' dominions. If we, his readers, can perceive this parallel, it is very likely because the eleventh century Welshman saw certain possibilities in that particular passage of TBDD.[2]

This is part of the evidence for my suggestion that the Welshman was very well acquainted with the Irish tale of Conaire Môr's death and that he drew upon it freely in the course of his work on *Branwen*. But if what I suggest is

[1] Even in one of the copies of TBDD, MS. D IV 2, we find the first part of the name written *Maill-*, obviously under the influence of the preceding Maine (ed. Knott, p. 49, ll. 207-8).

[2] There is however one serious objection to deriving *Matholwch* from *Milscothach*, namely that in the fragment of *Branwen* in the older manuscript Pen. 6 the former is written *Mallolwch* (cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 165). It may be added that Egerton Phillimore identified this name with the second element of Caer Vallwch in Flintshire (cf. Anwyl. *Trans. of 3rd. Intern. Cong. for Hist. of Religions*, II, 237). At first sight this would appear to be conveniently consistent with the concentration of names referring to the children of Llŷr in north-eastern Wales, but surely, even if we were to suppose the existence of an earlier version of the Second Branch in which Branwen's husband did not come from Ireland, the nature of the tale (if it bore the slightest resemblance to the extant version) would have neccssitated Mallolwch's (Matholwch's) being domiciled at some distance from Branwen's home. Moreover it is unlikely that there would be syncope of the stressed vowel in *Mallolwch*.

Even if we reject the idea that *Milscothach* was the source of the name of the Irish king in *Branwen*, we need not reject the suggested relationship between the swineherd episodes. It was the similarity between these which suggested a connection between the names in the first place.

true, then it surely follows that TBDD held some measure of attraction for him, in which case we might expect its influence to betray itself, not only through borrowed situations or materials, but also through the general treatment of the subject, as it discloses the story-teller's attitude towards the death of Branwen. The fact is that, with all their differences of style and form, there is a striking sameness of atmosphere between these tales of a king and queen inexorably impelled towards their doom by a series of events over which they themselves have no control. This atmosphere of clawing fatalism is produced in the Irish tale by the introduction of certain *gesa* or taboos to which the young king was subject. These strange decrees were not to be explained in terms of every-day life or its laws, and so their unwilling but conscious violation by Conaire, one after the other, produces an atmosphere compounded of the unreal and of a stark reality. This effect is heightened by the peculiar form in which the story is unfolded ; the natural climax ought to be the conflict which takes place at the end, but instead, the details of this struggle are foretold in the series of descriptions and identifications mentioned above, so that when the conflict finally arrives there is nothing left to tell.[1] In the case of *Branwen* the position is quite different. Here we have a well ordered tale based on literary standards far removed from those of TBDD, with a heroine instead of a hero and lacking the aid afforded by traditional *gesa* in the creation of an air of pre-ordained sorrow and death. Yet, with all these differences in the material of his story the author of *Branwen* achieves an atmosphere approaching that of the Irish tale, if not so oppressive in its fatalism, and he achieves this atmosphere through treating Branwen as a pawn, passive but sensitive, of the other characters in the tale. The measure of his success may be gauged from an independent comment, from the pen of Professor Eleanor Knott, the editor of TBDD : ' Modern scholarship is vigorously opposed to the conception of Celtic literature inspired by Matthew Arnold, but the reaction, justified as it is, need not drive us to deny

[1] Cf. Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 627.

that we meet, here and there, as Whitley Stokes recognized, touches of "that magic of Celtic romance, which Matthew Arnold loved and praised." Two Celtic stories have it beyond all others—the Irish Togail Bruidne Da Derga and the Welsh Branwen verch Lyr.'[1]

iii. *The Five Provinces*

After the account of the adventures with the head the writer of *Branwen* adds a paragraph dealing with the aftermath of the fight in Ireland. According to him,

'In Ireland no person was left alive save five pregnant women in a cave in the Irish wilderness; and to those five women at the very same time were born five sons, and those five sons they reared until they become grown youths and bethought them of wives and desired to possess them. And then each slept one by one with the other's mother, and they ruled the country and dwelled in it, and divided it amongst them all five. And because of that division the five provinces of Ireland are still so called.'

This account betrays his knowledge of Irish literature, and in particular of the artificial history fabricated for her by her 'synthetic' historians. Obviously he knows of the traditional five provinces and the fact that the Irish word *cóiced* means both 'a fifth' and 'a province'[2]; but, much more important, his epilogue is almost certainly an adaptation of an Irish legend. In the story of the revolt of the *Aithechthuatha*, or subject non-Goidelic peoples, we are told how the father of Tuathal Techtmar, Fiachu Findolad, was slain by them. According to one version they put to death all the descendants of Úgaine Már (i.e. the race of Conn, or Midland Gaels), with the exception of Tuathal, and made Éllim mac Conrach, one of their own number, king of Tara. Tuathal was brought up in secret in Ireland and after-

[1] Op. cit., p. ix f. Moreover, it appears from the context that Professor Knott had not in mind any closer relationship between the two tales than that of the casual borrowing suggested by Miss O'Rahilly.

[2] Cf. *The History of Gruffydd ap Cynan*, ed. A. Jones, p. 102, where it is said that Gruffydd's mother was Ragnaillt, daughter of Olaf, king of the city of Dublin and *pymet rann ywerdon*, which might be translated as 'a province of Ireland.'

wards went abroad to gather an army to help him in regaining his kingdom. There is, however, a better known, and probably older version of this legend, which is found in *Lebor Gabála* ('The Book of Invasions'). Following the text in the Book of Leinster, 23 b, after Fiachu Findolad had been slain by Éllim mac Conrach, his widow, Eithne Imgel, who was daughter of the king of Alba, fled to Alba and there gave birth to Tuathal, who returned twenty years after to reconquer Ireland.[1]

The basic idea is here the same as in *Branwen*, but we can come still closer to the latter in another Irish tale, which, as O'Rahilly shows, has probably been 'largely modelled on the legend of Tuathal and Éllim.' This relates how Cairbre Cattchenn ('C. Cathead'), who belonged to the *aithechthuatha*, slew the *soerchlanda* (i.e. the free or noble peoples i.e. the Goidels), and how three of their wives, who were pregnant, escaped to Alba and gave birth to sons. Meanwhile the crops and produce failed in Ireland (i.e. because of the lack of a legitimate and righteous ruler) and at length the three exiled princes were recalled. Their names were Feradach Finn Fechtnach, Corb Aulom and Tipraite Tírech, and they were the ancestors of Conn, Eogan and (Fiachu) Araide, who are analogous to Éremón, Éber and Ír, the three sons of Míl, from whom the Gaels are supposed to be descended. After their return they became kings of Tara, Munster and Ulster, and thus it is from them that the free peoples of Ireland, the Goidels, take their descent.[2]

If we allow for changes due to the different context, the similarity between the story of Cairbre and the account in *Branwen* is such as to warrant us accepting the one as the source of the other. But let us examine the relationship in greater detail :

[1] Cf. O'Rahilly's discussion of the tale and its different versions, EIHM, p. 154 ff.

[2] For a full treatment of the Cairbre legend see O'Rahilly, *Féilsgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill*, p. 101 ff.; also EIHM, p. 159 ff. On the texts see Thurneysen, ZCP XI, 56 ff.

The extant texts recounting the massacre of the Irish nobles by Cairbre fall into three versions, which are considerably later than the period of the composition of *Branwen*, but probably contain the material of the original tale subject to certain alterations and additions. All three versions agree in telling how Cairbre and his followers invited the nobles to a feast in Mag Cró (*vv.* M. Acruach, Cruachan, Cruachain) in Connacht and there plied them with meat and drink till it was an easy matter to slaughter them. It may be recalled that the conflict in *Branwen* also takes place in Connacht, for we are told that the site was somewhere on the other side of the river Shannon. I have already pointed out that the author of *Branwen* evidently used the Irish tale TBDD, and it is worth observing the dominant similarity between the situations of TBDD and the Cairbre tale, namely that a gathering of nobles, after being invited to a hall of feasting, is attacked and wiped out by a force of marauders or vassals. To suggest that the Welshman noted this similarity is not to make undue demands on the reader's belief, for it is clear that one of the redactors of the Irish tale was so impressed by it that he identified the hall in which the slaughter took place with the seven-doored Bruiden Meic Da Réo,[1] known as one of the five *bruidne* or hostels of Ireland, of which Bruiden Da Derga was the best known.[2]

Probably the most obvious point of disagreement between the story of Cairbre Cattchenn and the *Branwen* episode is that the latter relates his tale to the five provinces of Ireland, while the former deals merely with the provinces of Meath (Tara), Munster and Leinster. In itself this point is of little enough importance, and, since the particular historical schematism which gave rise to the Cairbre tale had no relevance to the Welsh author's purpose, it was natural for him to alter this element in order to give it more meaning in the eyes of his readers. For example, when he said that no one, save for the five women, was left alive

[1] ZCP XI, 61-2, 66.

[2] Cf. *Scéla Mucce Meic Da Thó*, ed. Thurneysen, § 1.

of the Irish people after the fight with Bendigeidfran, to his readers his words could only mean what they said. But one of the main features of the Irish 'synthetic history' from which he borrowed was the distinction between the Goidels of Ireland and its non-Goidelic populations. The near annihilation of the former in the Cairbre legend was brought about by these subject peoples. Thus only a section, the aristocratic ruling section, was threatened with extinction. In the new context of *Branwen* this complication had to go by the board. There the fight was one between the kings of Britain and Ireland, in which the population of the latter country was almost wiped out. Because of this change the surviving women could be made to stay in the Irish wilderness—a more convenient arrangement from the point of view of a British story-teller—while in the Irish legend they had to flee into exile in Alba.[1]

But, even if these differences between the Cairbre legend and the passage in *Branwen* can be seen to arise naturally enough from the difference between their contexts, in actual fact Irish literature itself provides a link between the three provinces of the Cairbre legend and the five of *Branwen* :

One of the striking features of the early Ulster Cycle of tales, which constitutes the most important section of Irish literature, is that it says nothing of the kingship of Ireland, which was associated elsewhere with Tara and which was represented in the 'synthetic history' as enduring from extremely early times. The native historians acknowledged this void by leaving a blank in their lists of the kings of Ireland at the time of the Ulster cycle, but they had an explanation, or perhaps it would be better to say a solution, at hand. They described the period as *Aimser na cóicedach*, 'the time of the provincial kings,' and asserted that there was a gap of five (or seven) years in the continuity of the kingship of Ireland, during which there were merely

[1] It should be kept in mind also that, down to the ninth century the name Alba meant 'Britain' and not merely 'Scotland' as in later times, cf. O'Rahilly, EIHM, pp. 385-7, 539. Worth noting also is the fact that, apart from some later alterations, TBDD uses *Alba* for Britain, cf. O'Rahilly, op. cit., p. 386. This suggests another possible reason, if such be necessary, why the Welsh writer did not make the women escape overseas.

provincial kings over the five provinces.[1] But, for our investigation of *Branwen* the important point is this : that the break in the kingship is said to have commenced with the death of Conaire in the hostel of Da Derga.

Representing as it did the view of the official historians this idea found its way into a number of different texts, both literary and historical,[2] and must have been known to the man who made use of the story of Cairbre Cattchenn and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga.* When he was at work on *Branwen,* the well established Irish view was that the main incident in TBDD, the death of Conaire Mór, brought about a period of rule by five provincial kings representing the five provinces. Similarly in *Branwen* the fight at the house in Ireland leads to the division of the country into five provinces ruled by five provincial kings. But the Welsh tale gives this division a new motivation by interpolating an adapted version of the Cairbre story.

Before leaving this sequence of events as related in *Branwen,* let us look at it from the point of prosaic commonsense : We are told that the Irish and British warriors fought, apparently inside the house built for Bendigeidfran, and that only seven of the British host escaped. Then, in the later passage, we are informed that only five women survived in Ireland. That is to say, the population—men, women and children—was all but wiped out as a result of this fight.[3] Of course this lacks all verisimilitude. Yet we know the author of *Branwen* to be an intelligent and

[1] Cf. Mac Neill, *Phases of Irish History,* p. 100 ; O'Rahilly, EIHM, p. 177 f., where he argues convincingly that *aimser na cóicedach* is a fabrication of the pseudo-historians by which they solved the difficulty of accommodating their list of the kings of Ireland to the historical background of the Ulster Cycle.

[2] Rawl. B 502 136 a 32 ; *Annals of Tig.,* RC XVI, 405 ; *Irische Texte* I, 212 ; *Todd Lect. Series,* III, 196-8 ; RC XI, 210 ; LL, ed. Best, Bergin and O'Brien, ll. 2887-8, 2891-2 ; LU, ed. Best and Bergin, ll. 3341-3.

[3] In the passage describing the conflict no reason is given for supposing that it did not take place entirely in or around the hall, but in the later passage we are told that the five Irish princes search the land where the battles had taken place (*ford y buassei yr aeruaeu*) and found there sufficient gold and silver to make them wealthy. If we take this to mean that there were a number of battle-sites, then we must regard it as a subsequent elaboration. We might, of course, see here a generic use of the definite article, in which case the meaning would be ' where there had been battles.'

artistic story-teller, in fact a person whom we might expect to be more sensitive to absurd exaggeration and inconsistency than the fabricators of the Irish Cairbre tale. Nevertheless where the latter tale is reasonably credible *Branwen* is ridiculously incredible.

Of course, the explanation is quite obvious in the light of what I have said above. The Welsh story-teller took from Irish the decimation-tale, but had to omit the feature which made it feasible in the Irish version, namely the differentiation between the nobility and the subject peoples. Once he made this omission, the decimation-story had to refer to the whole population of Ireland, not merely to an aristocracy which, in historical fact, was originally probably a small minority within the country.

There can remain little doubt that the author of *Branwen* used the story of Coirpre Cattchenn and for that reason the date of the Irish tale, being as it is a late composition, is a matter of some importance for any investigation of the Welsh tale. O'Rahilly concludes that it cannot have come into existence much earlier than the eleventh century.[1] On the other hand, since it is contained in both of the main saga-lists[2] it must have been in existence in the eleventh century.

[1] op. cit., p. 105 ff.

[2] LL 190 a ; *Anecdota from Ir. Mss.* II, 47. When a tale is present in both lists, it can be presumed to have been included in the parent-list from which both derive.

# IV

## OTHER ELEMENTS OF IRISH ORIGIN

THE three passages of *Branwen* already discussed will have shown that its author was acquainted with several Irish tales ; but, more than that, they will have shown that he did not merely borrow isolated passages which had somehow come to his notice, but that he must have had a fairly good knowledge of the whole context of the tales in question and of the literary and historical background to which they belonged. We cannot but take some account of this knowledge when we now turn to discuss other possible borrowings from Irish literature by the writer of *Branwen*, even though it is to be hoped that the evidence will be mainly independent of any such consideration.

### i. *Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his Cauldron*

One of the best known features of *Branwen* is the *Peir Dadeni*, otherwise known as the Cauldron of Rebirth. Its origin is described by Matholwch, king of Ireland, to Bendigeidfran :

One day he was hunting near a lough called Llyn y Peir ('the Lough of the Cauldron'),[1] when he saw a big man with yellow-red (*melyngoch*) hair coming from the lough with a cauldron on his back. He was a monstrous and

[1] I know of only one instance of a name corresponding to this in Irish, *Loch Coire* (MS. *Cori*), and even this has a variant reading, *Loch nGaire*. It is merely a bare reference to some lake in Connacht (*Metrical Dindshenchas*, ed. Gwynn, III, 307, l. 41). There are several references in Irish literature to a vessel called Ól nGualai which could provide sufficient ale for the men of Ulster and which gave its name to Loch Guala Umai, because it was under that lake that it was hidden in the time of the tales (*Irische Texte*, ed. Stokes and Windisch, III, ii, 516, 358, 556). See also p.45 inf. On *coire* as an element in Irish place-names see P. W. Joyce, *Irish Names of Places* I (1869), 49 ; II (1875), 408.

According to William Owen Pughe there was a lake called Llyn Pair about three miles from Towyn, and the nearby river, named Gwenwyn Meirch Gwyddno in the story of Taliesin, was at the time of writing known as Avon Llyn y Pair (*Camb. and Caled. Quart. Mag.* V (1833), 381 f. ; cf. F. J. North, *Sunken Cities*, p. 177). The name of the lake may of course be of late origin.

evil-looking man, with a woman following who was even twice as big as he. They came towards Matholwch and greeted him, and, in reply to a question from the king, the man said that the woman would conceive at the end of a month and a fortnight, and that the son born as a result would be a fighting man fully armed.[1] Matholwch maintained them for a year without trouble, but then his people began to grumble because of the outrages committed by the hateful couple. Finally, it came to the point where he was given the choice of getting rid of his guests or relinquishing his kingship, and since these would not leave of their own free will, he and his advisers resorted to the stratagem of the Iron House (cf. p. 16. sup.). The name of the husband was Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid[2] and of the wife Cymidei Cymeinfoll.

Now, there are a number of texts in Irish literature which contain characters comparable to the unwelcome guests of *Branwen*,[3] but it is interesting to note that the example which shows perhaps the closest affinity with the Welsh account is provided by TBDD.[4] Here we are told how Conaire, while on his way to Bruiden Da Derga, where he is to meet his death, encounters a monstrous man carrying a wailing pig on his back and followed by a no less monstrous woman. It is not necessary to quote the grotesque details of the description in the Irish text, suffice it to say that the man had only one hand, one eye and one foot, and that he and his companion were black or dark in appearance. How-

[1] This detail recalls the story of Athena's birth from the head of Zeus, as well as the stories associated with Jason and Cadmus of the armed men sprung from the dragon's teeth.

[2] The name recurs twice in the *Mabinogi* in variant forms. Later in *Branwen* Llashar son of Llayssar Llaesgygwyt is included among the seven men who were left to guard the Island of Britain, and in *Manawydan* the process by which the ornamental colouring called *calch llasar* was achieved was attributed to Llassar Llaes Gygnwyt. See I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, pp. 179, 233.

[3] In most of them the male and female characters occur separately, but the same traditional associations are implied in the various instances. For a discussion of the female characters as conceptions of the goddesses of war, see Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes*, p. 43 ff. ; for a discussion of the male characters see Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arth. Rom.*, p. 118 ff.

[4] Ed. Knott, p. 11 ; transl. RC XXII, 41 ff. ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 102 f.

ever, these physical peculiarities did not prevent him hurrying forward and greeting Conaire. In reply to the latter's query he says he is Fer Caille and that he brings a pig for Conaire so that he will not go fasting that night. The king excuses himself and seeks to defer this feast until some other night ; but Fer Caille and his wife, who is called Cichuil, are not put off so easily, for they go on before Conaire to the hostel of Da Derga and there await his coming. The text adds forebodingly that this was a *ges* for the king ; that is to say that his going to the *bruiden* or hostel occupied by Fer Caille with his pig was something he could not avoid, but which was nevertheless both a portent and a cause of his own death.

It is not surprising then that there is convincing evidence for identifying Fer Caille with Da Derga, the owner of the *bruiden*, who is without doubt in origin a supernatural figure, the god of the Otherworld.[1] In point of fact, the extant text of TBDD, which, as I have mentioned before, is a conflation of two versions of the same tale, contains a doublet of the Fer Caille incident. Here he and his wife are replaced by *na tri Deirg* (' the three Reds '), that is, a triplication of Derg, which is itself the basic form of the name by which the lord of the *bruiden* is known.[2] The passage describing the three Dergs states that they were all of a red colour, horses, arms and raiment—and also their

[1] Cf. O'Rahilly, EIHM, pp. 125-6.

[2] Ed. Knott, §§ 29-36 ; transl. RC XXII, 36 ff. ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 101 f. According to the text, when Conaire sees the three horse-men riding before him towards the house of Da Derga, he asks for someone to ride after them and bring them back, because it is a *ges* (' taboo ') for him that they should go in front of him. His son Lé Fer Flaith goes after them but cannot overtake them. No matter how he urges his horse, the same distance remains between him and the three Dergs. Then one of them sings an ominous lay over his shoulder, which the youth reports to his father. Three times in all does he pursue in vain and three times returns with a disquieting message for Conaire.

This might be compared with the episode in *Pwyll* where Rhiannon three times in a similar manner baffles the pursuit ordered by Pwyll before he himself seeks conversation with her. With regard to the numerous instances in Irish literature of a hero being enticed to the Otherworld by a supernatural being, see O'Rahilly's comment, EIHM, p. 127. For instances where the supernatural being carries a pig, see Murphy, *Duanaire Finn* III, 38. That the Derg who is triplicated in TBDD is the same as Da Derga is implicit in a reference in *Met. Dindshenchas* III, 116, where the latter's *bruiden* is called *tech nDeirg* (' the house of Derg ').

hair, which reminds us of the *melyngoch* of the *Branwen* text. In this connection it should be kept in mind that the colour red, as well as black, is frequently employed in Irish literature as being symbolic of the Otherworld in its more unfavourable aspects[1] ; we might, for example, compare the tale called *Táin Bó Regamna*, which describes how Cú Chulainn encounters a hideous pair like those in TBDD, except that in this case the woman has red eyebrows, wears a crimson mantle and rides in a chariot drawn by a single red horse, which has only one leg, and that the man, also attired in crimson, walks alongside, carrying a forked staff of hazelwood and driving a cow before him.[2]

The similarity between the Fer Caille passage in TBDD and the Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid passage in *Branwen* is close enough to warrant speculation when examined independently of other evidence, but, when taken in conjunction with the other connections between the two texts, it inevitably suggests the possibility that the Welsh tale has here drawn upon the Irish. It is true that there are considerable differences of detail between the two, but we must keep in mind that the author of *Branwen* was a conscious literary artist, and an exceptionally capable one. Just consider how skilfully he introduces the borrowed theme of the Iron House and inserts as a natural and logical forerunner to it this very episode of Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his wife. Such an artist does not merely borrow ; he adapts what he borrows to his own plan and conception, drawing upon his own wide range of reading and upon his reminiscences of tales and traditions heard in oral recitation,

[1] On this subject see A. C. L. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend*, p. 166 ff.

[2] Ed. Windisch, *Irische Texte* II, 242 f., 248 f. ; transl. *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 211 ff. My reason for stressing the associations of the colour red in this context and elsewhere in Irish literature is that they add point to the colouring of the monstrous man in *Branwen*. Moreover, the fact that they were so commonplace in Irish literary tradition means that, if the author of *Branwen* borrowed the Fer Caille episode from TBDD, he might have taken the colour element from its doublet (the version with the three Dergs) or else included it simply because he was familiar with it as a common feature of stories of the type he was using.

According to Thurneysen's analysis of TBDD the Fer Caille passage belongs to his version B and the three Dergs passage to version A (*Heldensage*, p. 625).

and also perhaps, where he feels it to be artistically necessary, upon his powers of invention. It follows that we should not expect to explain all the details of the relevant sections of the Welsh text through comparing them with their probable sources in Irish. Some of the differences between the corresponding Irish and Welsh passages may be due wholly or in part to contamination by lesser sources or to the exigencies of the new context in which the Welsh passages are found, and it may be worth while examining some of the main points of variance between the Fer Caille and Llasar Llaes episodes in this light :

(a) We are not told whence Fer Caille came, but Llasar was seen to emerge from a lough by Matholwch, who happened to be hunting on top of a mound overlooking the lough. Now it was all very well for TBDD to omit all mention of the provenance of Fer Caille, for early Irish tales of its type normally made considerable demands on the reader's, or hearer's, familiarity with the wide reaches of native tradition, and, as I have said, they are not complete and conscious literary efforts to the extent that *Branwen* is. The person reading or listening to TBDD in early Ireland would have been expected to know all that was implied by the sudden appearance of the monstrous pair in the narrative, and in any case the mention of the *ges*, or taboo, attaching to them would have set the atmosphere. Very different from the rough disorder and frankly tedious repetition of the Irish text is the ordered economy of *Branwen*. Thus, when the latter author introduces the unfamiliar couple into his tale, he feels it necessary, for the sake of literary continuity as well as to fill the gap left through losing the associations with Irish mythology, to say whence and how they came to encounter Matholwch, and of course in doing so he succeeeds in impressing their unnatural or supernatural character upon his readers. Once he had decided to describe how Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his wife came to meet Matholwch, his choice of manner and situation was very natural. The Otherworld in Celtic tradition was at different times and in different contexts localized under hills, under lakes, under

the sea, or in islands set in the expanse of the ocean. Given the inland setting, as in TBDD, only the first two situations are appropriate. It would be a simple matter to garner quite a collection of entrances to and exits from the Otherworld by way of lakes, but the best way of demonstrating the Irish associations of the details added by the Welsh writer is to give a resumé of an interesting episode from an Irish tale which I have already mentioned, *Fled Bricrenn* (' The Feast of Bricriu '):

> Three Ulster heroes, Loegaire, Conall and Cú Chulainn, are disputing as to which of them is most worthy of the *curadmír* or Champion's Portion. They are finally sent to seek judgement from a certain Uath mac Imomain (' Terror son of Great Fear ') at his lough. When they have stated the cause of their visit, Uath propóses a bargain. He will allow one of them to cut off his head to-day, provided that he may return on the morrow and do the same by his adversary. Conall and Loegaire refuse to engage themselves by this strange contract, reasonably enough, but Cú Chulainn agrees. He cuts off Uath's head, and the latter goes off to his lough with his head on his breast. When he returns next day, Cú Chulainn places his own head in readiness to receive the blow that is due, but Uath merely draws the blunt edge on his neck three times. Then he tells him to arise and ordains to him the *curadmír* and primacy of the warriors of Ireland.[1]

In the composite text of the extant *Fled Bricrenn* there is a doublet to this episode entitled *Cennach ind Ruanada* (' The Champion's Bargain '),[2] and it is mainly this latter version that W. B. Yeats drew upon for the subject of his play *The Green Helmet.*

As a literary figure, whatever of its mythological significance, the monstrous visitor of *Fled Bricrenn* corresponds to *Fer Caille* in TBDD, and it is easy to see how an independent story-teller might unite incidents originally

[1] Ed. G. Henderson, pp. 96-101 ; *Anc. Irish Tales*, p. 272.

[2] Ed. Henderson, pp. 116-129 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 277 ff.

connected with one or other of them.[1] In this particular case I am suggesting that, when the author of *Branwen* set about joining the borrowed Fer Caille episode to his own work, he felt there was a necessity for some form of introduction and called to mind an appropriate situation from a story such as that of Uath mac Imomain. In fact I am strongly inclined to believe that it was this very story he was thinking of.

In the first place, it is almost beyond the bounds of reason that the person who knew and made use of the Irish texts which I have already related to *Branwen* should have been ignorant of *Fled Bricrenn*, one of the two or three most important tales in Irish literature.[2] Moreover, we know that the Uath episode and its doublet, *Cennach ind Ruanada*, were transmitted outside Ireland together with other material from *Fled Bricrenn* and from the related texts dealing with Cú Chulainn and Cú Roí mac Dáiri. Kittredge in his *Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* demonstrated that the well-known Beheading Test, which occurs in Arthurian romances, French, English and German, dating from the latter part of the twelfth century to the latter part of the fourteen, derives from the similar beheading theme which constitutes the basis of the aforementioned doublets in *Fled Bricrenn*. He concluded that only the *Cennach ind Ruanada* version of the theme entered French literature and therefore that it alone was the source of all the Arthurian variants, but Miss Alice Buchanan has since shown clearly that this was too sweeping a judgement, and she argues convincingly that the Uath version was of particular importance, especially for *Gawain and the Green Knight*. In fact she puts forward a strong case for concluding that this middle English

[1] Loomis regards them as really one and the same character under different names, *Arthurian Tradition*, p. 287.

[2] According to Thurneysen *Fled Bricrenn* may date back as far as the eighth century (*Heldensage*, p. 449), but the section dealing with Uath mac Imomain is not linguistically earlier than the eleventh century (op. cit., pp. 462-6). Kittredge, writing without the benefit of Thurneysen's more authoritative judgement, felt that the Uath section might preserve a more primitive form of the basic material common to it and its doublet in *Fled Bricrenn* (*A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*, p. 19). Of course the two opinions are not necessarily incompatible.

tale was largely composed of the Uath version of the Beheading Test together with other incidents also taken from the stories of Cú Chulainn and Cú Roí.[1] Finally, Loomis believes that the Uath story has found its way, not only into *Gawain and the Green Knight*, but also into Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* anl the Welsh Arthurian tale, *The Lady of the Fountain*.[2]

In the light of this evidence and considering his familiarity with Irish literature, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the writer of *Branwen* knew of the Uath episode and was influenced by it in his adaptation of the Fer Caille incident.

Let us now for the sake of comparision take an instance illustrating the conception of the Otherworld as being at the bottom of a lake from which a magic cauldron is brought forth. The text is *Ġiolla an Fhiugha* ('The Lad of the Ferule'), an Early Modern Irish tale telling of certain fairy adventures which fell to the lot of Murchadh son of Brian Bóraimhe.[3] At the outset the hero is presented with two wonderful hounds by a mysterious stranger who says they have been sent by the Queen of Pride. Later the stranger takes his leave, and on the following day Murchadh goes hunting with his two hounds. He kills a huge quantity of game, but when he asks his followers to carry it home they refuse and go off, leaving him in his dilemma. At this stage another stranger[4] arrives and offers to carry the game for him and become his servant for a year, if Murchadh will promise to give him what he himself requests at the end of the year. The bargain is struck. In due course he asks for a ferule to fit his staff, but it transpires that the only ferule which will fit it exactly lies at the bottom of a lake together with a magic Cauldron of Plenty, both being guarded by a terrible serpent. Murchadh kills the serpent

[1] PMLA XLVII, 315-38. For other discussions bearing on the subject see Hulbert, *Mod. Phil.* XIII, 433-62 ; 689-730 : Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, pp. 39-83 ; *Journal of Eng. and Germ. Phil.* XLII, 149-84 : Nitze, *Mod. Phil.* XXXIII, 351-66.

[2] *Arthurian Trad. and Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 278 ff.

[3] Ed. Douglas Hyde, *Ir. Texts Soc.* I.

[4] Obviously the same as the first, but in different guise : cf. p. 127, n. 1 inf.

and recovers the two objects, but then the mysterious servant takes hold of the cauldron and dives under the lake with it. The hero pledges himself to recover the cauldron and, going to the bottom of the lake, finds himself in Tír na nOg, that is, in the Otherworld. This land is at the mercy of a giant whom Murchadh slays before recovering the cauldron and returning home.

This late tale is interesting in that it gives us an idea of the type of narrative which the author of *Branwen* may have known and been influenced by in his adaptation of his primary sources. Here we have the visitor from the Otherworld, the magic cauldron and a lake as the entrance to the Otherworld. That is to say, the basic elements are the same in the Early Modern Irish tale and in *Branwen*, and yet the manner in which they are employed is quite different. What in fact gives the Welsh narrative its peculiar atmosphere is its emphasis on the pair of Otherworld visitants and their monstrous appearance, and it is precisely this element that we may attribute to the influence of TBDD.

(b) Another difference between *Branwen* and TBDD in the account of the monstrous couple is that the former substitutes a cauldron for the pig which Fer Caille was carrying on his back. The disagreement here is more apparent than real, however, for in their essential signification there is really no difference between the pig and the cauldron. Both occur frequently in early Irish tales as symbols of the Otherworld and normally they might be interchanged without weakening or distorting the narrative. So in TBDD where the fundamental purpose of the pig is to identify Fer Caille with the lord of the Otherworld feast of plenty, the substitution of a cauldron for the pig would have had extremely little effect otherwise on the tale.[1] But not so with *Branwen*. Here the author was using the

[1] We have seen already in TBDD itself the implication that Fer Caille and Da Derga may be equated (cf. p. 40 sup.), and it is therefore illuminating to compare Fer Caille's pig with Da Derga's cauldron, which, we are told elsewhere in TBDD, never left the fire, but was always cooking food for the men of Ireland (ed. § 153 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 121).

episode in question to explain how Bendigeidfran had come by the *Peir Dadeni* (The Cauldron of Rebirth). By an extremely simple substitution he succeeded in linking together all this sequence of borrowed material to the later story of Bendigeidfran's expedition to Ireland.

This substitution may have been suggested by another well known tale which tells of certain happenings culminating in the death of Cú Roí mac Dáiri, whose story cycle was known in Wales and exerted a profound influence on Arthurian literature (cf. p. 153 inf.). The earlier of the two versions of *Aided Con Roí* (' The Death of Cú Roí ') may be summarized as follows :

Bláthíne the daughter of Conchobor king of Ulster is carried off by Echde Echbél to his home in Cantire in Scotland. Cú Chulainn undertakes a raid to recover her and at the same time to gain possession of certain treasures which include a magic Cauldron of Plenty. Aided by a fellow of boorish appearance (who later turns out to have been Cú Roí in disguise), he succeeds in his quest. When the spoils are divided the treasures are offered to Cú Roí, but the Ulstermen seek to retain Bláthíne and the cows till the year's end.

In spite of Cú Roí's requests, these are held by Cú Chulainn and his people till the end of the third year. When he is then refused once more, he seizes Bláthíne together with the cows and the cauldron and carries them off. (In the later version he makes off with the lady under his armpit and the cauldron on his back[1]). Cú Chulainn pursues him and comes to grips only to be defeated ignominiously. Cú Roí returns to his fortress in the south-west of Ireland. Later he is betrayed by Bláthíne and slain by Cú Chulainn, but Bláthíne herself is in turn killed by Ferchertne, Cú Roí's poet, in revenge for his lord.[2]

Evidence for the existence of several versions of the above incidents has been discussed at considerable length by

[1] Ed. R. I. Best, *Ériu* II, 20 ff. ; cf. Thurneysen *Heldensage*, p. 440 ff. The latter assigns this text to the twelfth century.

[2] Ed. Thurneysen, ZCP IX, 190 ff. ; cf. *Heldensage*, pp. 431-5.

Thurneysen,[1] but it is not necessary for us to follow their complicated relationships. The important point is that we have here in Irish literature and proliferating from an early date[2] the story of an expedition to win a magic cauldron as well as to recover an abducted lady. Moreover, the person who bears off the cauldron is a rough unkempt fellow who turns out to be Cú Roi. Now, in one of the two beheading episodes from *Fled Bricrenn*, that entitled *Cennach ind Rusnada*, the monstrous challenger whom I have compared with Llasar in *Branwen* identifies himself as Cú Roi, so that, even though the present tale does not go to any great lengths to emphasize the ugliness of Cú Chulainn's fellow in war, we are to understand that he was of the same ilk as the fearsome being who, according to the Welsh tale, emerged from a lake in Ireland bearing a magic cauldron on his back.

In the texts already cited of the raid carried out by Cú Roi and Cú Chulainn, it is the former who plays the main part. Were it not for his prowess, the expedition would have failed. There exists, however, a poem attributed to Cú Chulainn in which he tells of a similar expedition to the Land of Shade which he himself carried out independently.[3] The fruit of his effort was a cauldron and three cows as before together with the daughter of the king. On the way home across the open sea his company was overwhelmed by a storm and he had to come to their rescue. Considering that he is not traditionally of great stature, his feat was rather impressive. He took nine men on each of his arms, thirty on his head and eight on his thighs, and, thus encumbered, swam home.

As it stands, this episode is obviously a variant of the expedition which the other texts make Cú Chulainn share

[1] ZCP IX. 189 ff. ; *Heldensage*, pp. 431-46.

[2] Thurneysen traces it back to the first half of the eighth century (*Heldensage*, p. 431).

[3] It occurs in the text entitled *Siabarcharpat Con Culainn* ('Cú Chulainn's Phantom Chariot'), *Anecd. from Ir. MSS.* III. 54, l. 20 - 55, l. 17 ; cf. Thurneysen, ZCP IX. 196 ff. ; *Heldensage*, p. 569 f. He assigns the complete text to the tenth century.

with Cú Roí. I cite it now, not so much for its immediate interest, but because it may at a later stage cast some light on the development and composition of *Branwen.*

(c) For our third point of divergence let us consider the events leading up to the abortive attempt to destroy Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his wife in the iron house. They were with Matholwch for a year without any trouble or dissension, but during the second year they began to make themselves hated ' by committing outrage, and molesting and harassing gentles and ladies.' From then on Matholwch's people rose against him and bade him part with his unwelcome guests or else with his kingdom.

There is nothing like this in TBDD, and such a train of events as is here presented would be unnecessary and irrelevant to it. Let it be said, nevertheless, that TBDD does lay considerable stress on the fact that Fer Caille and his spouse were unwelcome visitors, and in its bare outline the situation is very similar in the Irish and Welsh tales : the king is doomed—either to death or to dismissal—unless he can release himself from the supernatural beings who have come to be his guests and now refuse to leave. But, in TBDD the whole meaning of the tale, as well as of this episode, is attached to the king's tragic death, whereas in *Branwen* the author has to prepare for the stratagem of the Iron House to be used against Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his wife, and the ensuing events require that Matholwch's position should be unimpaired by his contact with these guests. In TBDD the dread significance of Fer Caille was sufficient to explain the unwelcome nature of his visit, whereas in *Branwen* a more rationalistic explanation had to be found or invented. And so we have the ill-usage of Matholwch's subjects by Llasar and his wife and the resulting wave of dissatisfaction which forces the king to act. But, even in this rather obvious case, where we might consider it unnecessary to look for sources, the story-teller's powers of invention probably did not work completely independently of his other materials. The unrest of the people he may have taken from the *Calumniated Wife* story attached to *Branwen,* where Matholwch's subjects force him to humiliate

her ; or he may also have taken it from the Irish tale of Cairbre Cattchenn, upon which he draws elsewhere (cf. p. 33 ff. sup.), and which tells how the usurper king is forced by the will of the people to give up the throne after the crops and produce have failed. However that may be, the important point about the passage in question is that where *Branwen* differs from TBDD, the differences are mainly due to the nature of the other materials incorporated in the Welsh text.

ii. *The Cauldron of Rebirth*

As I have mentioned earlier, a common element in Celtic tales of the Otherworld was the Cauldron of Plenty, a vessel which provided for everyone the food of his choice and which always held sufficient however great the number to be served from it. Each of the *bruidne* or 'hostels' of Ireland, including that of Da Derga, had a cauldron of this sort, for these *bruidne*, which presumably never had any existence in fact, represented by their perpetual abundance and hospitality the typical Irish conception of the Otherworld feast. Thus, in TBDD, the tale with which *Branwen* is so clearly associated, we read of Da Derga, the lord of the *bruiden*, that *ever since he took to husbandry* (or *ever since he set up his establishment*), *his cauldron had never left the fire, but was continually cooking food for the men of Ireland.* What little relevant material is to be found in Welsh shows that in Welsh tradition also the Otherworld Cauldron was well known.[1] It has provided a fertile field of discussion for Arthurian scholars seeking to prove and define its relationship to the Grail of Arthurian romance. But it has also presented them with one very perplexing problem in that

[1] For example the cauldron of Pen Annwfyn in the poem *Preiddeu Annwn*, *Book of Taliesin*, ed. Evans, p. 54 f. ; Loomis, PMLA LVI, 890 : cf. also Loomis loc. cit. p. 910 ff. ; Helaine Newstead, *Bran the Blessed*, pp. 20 f., 43, 68. There is also the cauldron of Cyrridwen, which was a vessel of inspiration and knowledge and which plays an important part in the *Hanes Taliesin* ; cf. I. Williams, *Lects. on Early Welsh Poetry*, p. 61.

The cauldron with divine associations is attested for the Continent by the important vessel found at Gundestrup in Jutland, which bears representations of gods and was probably used for religious purposes (cf. H. Hubert, *Rise of Celts*, pp. 102, 124 ; *Greatness and Decline of Celts*, pp. 102, 105, 245, 261 ; J. Marx, *Légende Arthurienne*, pp. 111, 138 f.).

throughout the extensive resources of early Irish literature, furnishing as it does abundant information on cauldrons and various other vessels pertaining to the Otherworld, there seems to be no prototype for the revivifying powers attributed to the cauldron of Brân.

In spite of this lack of supporting instances in early Irish and Welsh it is possible to regard the cauldron incident in *Branwen* as simply belonging to the widespread folklore theme of resuscitation brought about by various means, including water, milk, fire, etc.[1] This is the view taken by Vendryes :

> 'L'épisode du *pair dadeni*, ' chaudron de résurrection,' dans le mabinogi de Branwen, fait partie du folklore universel. C'est le même chaudron dans lequel la magicienne Médée faisait bouillir les gens après les avoir coupés en morceaux pour leur rendre ensuite jeunesse et vigeur ; elle avait conseillé aux filles de Pélias de soumettre leur père à ce traitement ; mais per trahison elle s'arrangea pour l'empêcher de réussir. L'aventure était célèbre. Euripide en avait tiré le sujet d'une tragédie, les Péliades ; et Plaute la rappelle en plaisantant dans son Pseudolus (V. 869)'.[2]

It receives support from the fact that modern Irish folklore contains numerous instances of a cauldron of healing (*iocshláinte*). I have noted five such instances in Curtin's *Hero-Tales* alone,[3] and two in his *Irish Fairy-Tales*.[4] In these the hero or his opponent, after being sorely wounded in combat, is completely healed by entering or being placed in the magic cauldron. It may well be that modern Irish folklore here preserves the tradition of a healing cauldron which has left no trace throughout all the texts of the early formal literature. It is a distinct possibility ; yet it does not provide us with entirely satisfactory solutions to all our queries.

First of all, are we justified in dismissing so lightly the divergence of *Branwen* from early Irish literary tradition on this point ? If the Welsh text really presents an authentic

[1] Cf. Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index*, E 50 ff.

[2] *Ét. Celt.* VI, 360.

[3] Pp. 71, 110f., 230, 235, 317, 382.

[4] Pp. 99, 119.

British and Celtic conception of the Otherworld cauldron, we might well expect to find some hint of it in the numerous references to that vessel in Irish literature. Generally the Irish references do not show conspicuous subtlety or literary development. The effect of the account of the Otherworld vessel on the context of each tale viewed as a literary unit is not normally a primary consideration. The traditional version of the Otherworld *apanage* comes first, and the story is made to accommodate it. In the case of the writer of *Branwen*, however, we know we are dealing with a literary stylist, almost in the modern sense of the term ; one who had considerable skill in drawing unity and form from varied and unconnected materials. Considering this synthetic nature of his composition and also the fact that of the early literatures of Wales and Ireland his work alone contains the revivifying cauldron, we must by way of a second line of investigation, examine the passage containing it as part of a consciously literary creation. In the second place, all the Irish folklore instances of the healing cauldron which have come to my notice are consistent in attributing to the vessel the power of restoring wounded men, not dead men, to health ; in fact one of them states explicitly that it cannot restore life to the dead ; "There is a cauldron of *iocshláinte* (health cure) in the castle,' said the young woman. ' Go in and use that ; it cures every wound, every sickness, but cannot bring life back."[1] In this the cauldron of folklore differs from its counterpart in *Branwen*, and even though healing by magic and resuscitation by magic may be related originally, this difference is sufficiently clear to prevent us leaping rashly to the conclusion that the folklore instances confirm the authentic traditional character of the cauldron in the Welsh tale.

We have already considerable grounds for believing that the author of *Branwen* borrowed heavily from Irish literature, and the proper course now is surely to see whether he might not have known of some Irish tale which suggested to him the idea for his episode of the Cauldron of Rebirth. Moreover, appreciating his method of work, we must not allow

[1] Curtin, *Irish Folk-Tales*, p. 99.

our attention to be monopolized by the cauldron as such, but must take account of the attendant circumstances in which it was employed and see how these tally with possible Irish sources.

The prose version of the Dindshenchas, the great compendium of topographical lore, contains the following passage on the place-name Ard Lemnacht :

> ' Crimthann Sciathbél, king of Leinster, delivered battle to the Tuatha (peoples) of Fidga and Fochmann, of whom each man had the strength of a hundred. He whom they wounded would perish,[1] and neither points nor edges used to hurt them. Now Crimthann brought Clann Cruithnig to help his men, and promised them, if they were victorious, the heritage of the Fir Fidga. Then said Trostán : "Let thrice fifty milch-cows of a single colour be milked into one trench, and let those whom the men of Fidga shall wound (slay) be bathed in that milk, and they shall arise healed from the poisons of their weapons. But let all their slain be beheaded. ' Thus it was done and Crimthann was victor and the Tuatha Fidga fell.'[2]

A similar account is found in *Lebor Gabála* (' The Book of Invasions ')[3], a compilation with which the author of *Branwen* was evidently acquainted, as we have already seen. It omits mention of the beheading but adds one detail which the writer of the Dindshenchas obviously took for granted or left out inadvertently, namely that the Tuatha Fidga were Britons or of British origin. This is an integral element of the legend as we can see from the earliest extant version, which is but a bare outline occurring in a poem by Mael Mura of Othain (+887), itself a versified account of the Cruithnig or Picts of Britain. Mael Mura's poem is found attached to the *Lebor Bretnach* or Irish version of Nennius,

[1] Because their weapons were poisoned : cf. *Lebor Bretnach*, ed. Van Hamel, p. 9 (=Todd's *Ir. Nennius*, p. 124 ; cf. also. p. lxviii).

[2] RC XV, 427 ; cf. similar account in *Met. Dindshenchas* III, 164. Linguistically the version in the prose Dindshenchas is certainly old enough for the author of *Branwen* to have known of it.

[3] LL 15 a 22 (=Todd's *Irish Nennius*, p. lxxiv).

where it is preceded by a prose passage based partly on the poem and partly on the later version of the legend referred to above.[1]

Again in *Cath Maige Tuired* (' The Battle of Mag Tuired '), known as the Second Battle of M.T., we find the resuscitation theme. In this battle against the Fomoire the slain warriors of the Tuatha Dé Danann were revived through being cast into a well over which spells had been chanted : ' This then is what used to put fire into the warriors who were slain there, so that they were swifter on the morrow. Because Dian Cécht and his two sons, even Ochtriuil and Miach, and his daughter Airmed were singing spells over the well named Sláine (' Health '). Now their mortally wounded men were cast into it as they were slain. They were alive when they came out. Their mortally wounded became whole through the might of the chant of the four leeches who were about the well.'[2] The tale in which this passage occurs conforms to the pattern imposed upon Irish history by the early ' synthetic historians ' and represented primarily by their great compilation, the *Lebor Gabála* or ' Book of Invasions.' This euhemerizes the Tuatha Dé Danann, originally Irish deities, and describes them as a historical people—although possessed of magic arts—who conquered Ireland from the Fir Bolg and held it until the invasion of the sons of Míl, or Goidels. It is against this background that we find related in the Second Battle of Mag Tuired how the Fomoire invaded the country and attempted to reduce ' the men of Ireland,' the Tuatha Dé Danann, to subjection. According to O'Rahilly, this tale is really the mythical contest between Balar and Lug rationalized into a battle between two opposing armies,[3] and one cannot help recalling how important are the traditions of this contest, as W. J. Gruffydd has shown, for the study of *Math vab*

[1] Ed. Van Hamel, pp. 8-14 (=Todd's *Ir. Nennius*, p, 120 ff.).

[2] Ed. and transl. Stokes, RC XII, 94 f. ; cf. *Met. Dindshenchas*, ed. Gwynn, IV, 182-4. It has been suggested that *Cath Maige Tuired* as it stands is the work of an eleventh or twelfth century redactor working mainly upon ninth century material (Murphy, *Éigse* VII, 195 ; cf. O'Brien, *Ériu* XII, 239).

[3] EIHM, pp. 313 f., 388, 482 f.. 524.

*Mathonwy*, which together with *Branwen*, is closely associated with Gwynedd. In fact, his investigation of the Irish Lug-Balar and cognate traditions in Gaelic led him to conclude that *Math* 'is altogether Goidelic in origin, though developed in Wales.'[1] I shall not presume to comment on his conclusion in this study except in so far as it applies to *Branwen*.

To the resuscitation theme in *Cath Maige Tuired* and that associated with Ard Lemnachta we may add for the sake of comparison a similar incident in a modern Conamara folk-tale version of the Lug-Balar contest. This tells how Balar's followers were at first gaining supremacy in the fighting, because they dipped their swords and spears into a venomous well, so that the wounds they inflicted were incurable. The advice of the Old Blind Sage was to get twenty measures of the milk of Glas Gownach[2] and pour it into the well ; this would neutralize the poison. So it was done, and the weapons of Balar's men lost their venomous power.[3] This is not, as it stands, an example of the resuscitation theme, but a comparison with the two instances cited above shows clearly that the theme is only barely disguised in the folk-tale. Moreover, it contains elements of both the early versions, the poisoned weapons and magic milk of one, and the well of the other, and, of course, it has the Old Blind Sage as a parallel to Trostán the druid and Dian Cécht, the sage of healing. It is possible that the folk-tale instance derives from the early literary versions cited, but as against this, we must bear in mind that many of the old Lug-Balar traditions are better preserved in the modern folk-tales than in the early literary texts.[4]

With regard to the *Peir Dadeni* of *Branwen* and its healing properties, which are so singular among the cauldrons of early Celtic tradition, I suggest that the Welsh author has

[1] *Math* p. 130, n. 28, and passim.

[2] In Mod. Irish *Glas Ghaibhneach, Glas Ghaibhneann*, etc., meaning 'the Grey Cow of Goibniu.' It was a magic animal providing an unending supply of milk.

[3] J. Curtin, *Hero Tales of Ireland* (1894), p. 302 f. ; cf. Gruffydd, *Math*, p. 70.

[4] Cf. Murphy, *Duanaire Finn* III, xliii-xlv.

combined the theme of the revivifying milk (water) with that of the Otherworld cauldron. This does not of necessity exclude from consideration the healing cauldron attested in Irish folk-tales, which, if it does in fact represent a survival from ancient Irish tradition, may have been known to the author of *Branwen*. But, even were that the case, it cannot explain the context of the *Peir Dadeni* as well as do the tales referred to above. Moreover, as I have mentioned, it is possible to explain the nature of this vessel without any recourse to the folklore cauldron of healing. The writer had already introduced the Otherworld cauldron into his tale, and it did not require any great manipulation of the source-material to substitute it in the resuscitation episode for the trench in the ground or the well.[1] Indeed, the fact

[1] Perhaps we might compare with this suggested substitution the passage, also in the story of the Second Battle of Mag Tuired, telling how the Fomoire filled with porridge the huge king's cauldron 'into which went four score gallons of new milk (*lemlacht* or *lemnacht* ; cf. the above resuscitation tale associated with Ard Lemnachta) and a like quantity of meal and fat. Goats and sheep and swine are put into it, and they are all boiled together with the porridge.' This mixture they poured into a hole in the ground and compelled the Dagdae, who had come from the Tuatha Dé Danann to reconnoitre the position of their enemies, to consume it all (ed. Stokes, RC XII, §§88-93). I am not suggesting that the author of *Branwen* had this incident in mind (although it is not impossible, if, as I believe, he knew the story in which it occurs) but merely that it offers—as it were, in reverse—an instance of the supposed substitution of cauldron for hole in the ground, since the latter becomes virtually the Dagdae's cauldron.

We might compare also an incident from the text called *Echtra Cormaic i Tír Tairngiri* ('Cormac's Adventure in the Land of Promise'). While Cormac king of Ireland is in a wondrous house in the Otherworld, he sees a man enter bearing a wood-axe in his right hand and a log in his left hand, and with a pig behind him. The man strikes the pig with the axe and kills it ; then he cuts up the log into faggots ; and finally he casts the pig into the cauldron and sets it to cook. He tells how he has come by 'a pig and an axe and a log, the pig to be killed with the axe every night, and the log to be cleft by it, and there will then be enough firewood to boil the pig, and enough for the palace besides. And, moreover, the pig is alive on the morning after, and the log is whole. And from thence till today they are in that wise' (ed. Stokes, *Irische Texte* III, 195-6, 214). Here the pig corresponds to the non-diminishing food of Otherworld vessels referred to in various tales, but it is easy to see how a context like this, if known to the author of *Branwen*, could have been a contributory factor in the linking of the Cauldron of Plenty and the resuscitation theme.

Since completing this discussion of the 'Cauldron of Rebirth,' I find that Loomis had come to doubt the antiquity of the healing cauldron and suggests a possible connection with the Irish resuscitation tradition (PMLA LVI, 910, n. 140= *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, p. 157, n. 140). This independent opinion, arrived at from a somewhat different starting point to mine, may therefore be taken as confirming the trend of my argument.

that he was transferring the resuscitation theme from an outdoor to an indoor setting would make the change a natural one. The outline of the situation in *Branwen* coincides perfectly with that of the Irish legend : In both cases the men of Ireland possess the healing instrument which enables them to combat the more powerful forces of invaders. This basic similarity means also that there is little point in trying to find what particular form of the resuscitation theme in Irish was the main source of the Welsh adaptation. It may well have been either, or both, of the above literary versions, which are both found in texts associated with the artificial or 'synthetic' history of Ireland, the grandiose schematization of the Irish past which gradually took shape in the successive recensions of the *Lebor Gabála*. There is evidence elsewhere in *Branwen* that the Welsh author knew this official history and borrowed from it. The Ard Lemnachta tale was connected with the Irish version of Nennius and named the invaders as Britons. It was likely for this reason alone to attract the attention of the Welsh story-teller. It also contained a beheading element comparable, if not similar, to the beheading of Bendigeidfran in *Branwen*, and, as we shall see later, this may be evidence that it was in fact used by him. On the other hand, the story of the Second Battle of Mag Tuired was one of the most important in Irish literature, particularly with regard to mythological traditions, in spite of the euhemeristic tendency which influenced its composition.[1] Consequently I should hesitate to exclude either of the two literary versions of the resuscitation theme from the Welshman's range of reading (or hearing) in Irish literature. It seems better to accept the possibility that he

[1] It may be noted incidentally that it contains a reference to the cauldron of the Dagdae, who was the chief god in Irish tradition : 'No company ever went from it unsatisfied' (RC XII, 58 ; cf. ZCP XVIII, 83). This is the same as the Otherworld cauldron found in the *bruiden* of Da Derga in TBDD and also in *Branwen*.

knew both of them, not to mention oral or folklore versions.[1]

In point of fact there is a similar resuscitation motif which is extremely common in Gaelic folklore and occurs also in Scandinavian literature and at least once in Welsh. It has been examined at some length by A. H. Krappe,[2] and I shall therefore quote his summary of the characteristics of the stories in which it occurs : 'There is a war going on between two parties, one of which enjoys the assistance of a witch, usually of extreme ugliness, who by her magic arts, generally a wonder-working balsam,[3] resuscitates such of her warriors as have been slain in the previous engagement. Thus, while the enemy is gradually being exhausted, her own party does not diminish in number. The long battle comes to a close when the hero of the tale joins the weaker party, discovers the witchery and slays the hag. It is only in one variant, that of the Mabinogi of *Peredur ab Evrawc*, that the hero sides with the party possessing the resuscitating powers.' It may be added that the resuscitation usually takes place at night after the close of the day's fighting. The popularity of the Everlasting Fight motif in Ireland may be gauged from the fact that, some years ago, Ó Duilcarga had gathered over thirty examples in addition to those cited by Krappe.[4] Krappe himself comes to the conclusion that these 'tales about the hag of Slaughter,' including the Scandinavian examples, are of Celtic origin.[5] Also, he accepts the episode in the Second Battle of Mag Tuired as an early instance of the motif.[6] In this he is

[1] In *Branwen* we are told that the dead bodies were thrown into the cauldron, 'and *on the morrow* they would arise as good fighting men as before.' This might be compared to *Cath Maige Tuired*, as quoted above, according to which the warriors slain each day were livelier than ever *on the morrow*. This adds to the connection between *Branwen* and the Irish resuscitation tales.

[2] *Balor With the Evil Eye*, p. 132 ff.

[3] The means of resuscitation can be an enchanted well as in *Cath Maige Tuired* ; cf. Curtin, *Hero-Tales*, p. 71.

[4] *Béaloideas* IV, 342 : cf. V, 210 ; VI, 29 ; also Murphy, *Duanaire Finn* III, 418 in index *s.v. Motifs* (*everlasting fight* etc.) ; Nutt, *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, p. 165 ff.

[5] op. cit., p. 153.

[6] op. cit., p. 137.

undoubtedly correct, but, in spite of this relationship, it is clear that the Mag Tuired and Ard Lemnachta instances present a more literary, or more deformed, version of the folklore motif. The battle is provided with a quasi-historical background lacking in the folk-tales. In the latter the party with which the hero sides normally consists merely of several warriors, sometimes brothers, but in the literary texts, with their historical setting, the fight becomes a battle between forces of considerable size. The version of the resuscitation motif resulting from such literary alteration is intermediate between the *Branwen* and the Irish folklore variants and seems to provide in itself sufficient explanation of the Welsh adaptation.

It does not necessarily follow that the author of *Branwen* was unaware of the folklore variants.[1] It is a long time now since Alfred Nutt, in discussing the resuscitation episode dealing with Perceval, Gonemans and the hag in the portion of the *Conte du Graal* due to Gerbert, one of Chrétien de Troyes' continuators, came to the conclusion 'that the French poet drew from traditional popular Celtic sources' [2] Krappe's investigation leads to the same conclusion.[3] But the French instance of the resuscitation motif, as well as that occurring in the Welsh *Peredur*,[4] obviously derive from a folklore variant (or variants) of the motif similar to those found in Gaelic. Indeed, the evidence for the popularity and antiquity of the theme in Ireland makes it extremely likely that the ultimate source of the French and Welsh instances was one or more Irish folktales. To sum up, therefore, the probability is that the resuscitation motif

[1] We can only go so far and no further in seeking to probe the Welsh story-teller's reaction to his Irish material and to define the cross-relationships suggested to him by these borrowings. For example, his possible awareness of Irish folktales about the ugly resuscitating hag may have provided an additional reason for joining this episode to that of Llasar Llaes and his ugly wife by means of the revivifying cauldron. But surmises of this type are too vague to be useful.

[2] *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, p. 163.

[3] *op. cit.*, p. 153.

[4] *op. cit.*, p. 136.

passed from Irish into Welsh in both a literary and a folk-lore form, although the main sources employed by the author of *Branwen* were probably of the former type.

There is one other element in *Branwen* which requires to be discussed in conjunction with the resuscitation motif, namely the sentence stating that Bendigeidfran was wounded in the foot with a poisoned spear. It is a sentence of considerable importance for Arthurian studies, because Bendigeidfran has been identified with Bron or the Maimed King of the Grail romances, and the implications of this identification as well as of the wounding or maiming on which it depends to some extent, are inextricably bound up with the interpretation and analysis of the whole body of these romances.[1] But it is extremely important that we keep in mind all the while that the whole complex of Arthurian associations which can be traced back to Branwen do not increase the scope of the sentence in the Welsh tale, and therefore the wounding of Bendigeidfran must be investigated on its merits without reference to its later derivatives. For instance, in the Arthurian tales the king's wound is connected with the idea of the waste country, and this cannot be divorced from the familiar Irish tradition that a king with a physical blemish brought ruin and barrenness on his land and therefore such could not be allowed to take or retain the throne. It has been asserted that Bendigeidfran is obliged to relinquish his throne on account of his wound, for instance as it is put by Jean Marx :

> ' De même Bran, le dieu-héros des *Mabinogion* dan lequel beaucoup d'érudits ont reconnu a juste titre, semble-t-il, le prototype du Roi-Pêcheur Bron, devra, lorsqu'il se trouvera blessé et atteint dans son prestige, abandonner son trône.'[2]

Whether this opinion can be supported by a comparison of *Branwen* with other legends of a maimed or blemished king

[1] Cf. Helaine Newstead, *Bran the Blessed*, pp. 168-186, 188-9, and passim ; W. A. Nitze, *Med. Studies in Mem. of G. S. Loomis*, p. 135 ff. ; Marx, *La Légende Arthurienne et le Graal*, p. 197 ff.

[2] *La Légende Arthurienne*, p. 144 ; cf. also his chapter dealing wih the Waste Land etc., p. 159 ff.

I cannot presume to judge here, but I do feel that it receives no very strong support from the narrative of *Branwen* itself. It might be argued, although not convincingly, that the wounding of Bendigeidfran and the consequent events were originally related in some way to the theme of the maimed king, but in that case the relationship has been obscured in the text of *Branwen* and it is difficult to believe that the eleventh century author had it in mind when he wrote the episode in question. If this had been so, he would surely not have been so ambiguous about it—would not, for example, have left the usurpation of the crown by Caswallawn son of Beli apparently unconnected with the wounding of Bendigeidfran.

This is all the more relevant in view of the fact that the wounding incident may well be related to the borrowed Irish material concerning the resuscitation of the warriors. In the Irish tales one group of the combatants, who might be described as the foreigners, have poisoned weapons, but their opponents come by a magic means which enables them to counteract this.[1] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author of *Branwen*, even if we assume that he was working from some version of the maimed king theme, got the idea of using this from the Irish tale, or episode, which he was in the act of adapting. Whether we should go further and derive the wounding episode entirely from the Irish resuscitation tales is rather more doubtful. It is suggested very obviously by the parallel between the coupling of the beheading with the poisoned weapons in *Branwen* and in the Ard Lemnachta legend (see p. 53 sup.), but, if the suggestion which I make later regarding the Morddwyd Tyllion allusion be correct (p. 162 f. inf.), then there must have been an earlier tradition in Welsh about the wounding of Brân. Consequently, the most satisfactory solution would seem to be to accept the wounding episode in *Branwen* as a fusion of a Welsh tradition of the wounding of Brân with an Irish resuscitation legend.

This leaves us still with the difficulty of analysing the

[1] Cf. the Ard Lemnachta legend and the story from Curtin's *Hero-Tales*, p. 302 f.

name given to the magic cauldron in *Branwen*. It is as well to acknowledge at the outset that the usual translation of *peir dadeni* as ' cauldron of rebirth ' may appear a little suspect. In the first place the word *geni* does not seem the most appropriate one to use of the resuscitation of warriors slain in their full maturity. On the other hand the mere suitability or aptness of an expression in its immediate context is by no means the only criterion of its authenticity, especially when we are ignorant of the association it may have had for the story-teller. As it happens, *Branwen* itself preserves perhaps one of these mental cross-references. We are told earlier in the tale that Cymidei Cymeinfoll, the monstrous wife of Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid, would give birth to a son a month and a fortnight after his conception, and that that son would be a fighting man fully armed. It would be rash to suggest that there is any direct connection between this passage and the description of the cauldron, but it does at least seem likely that the writer would have perceived how the word *dadeni* in its context echoed the earlier episode.

The second consideration concerns the form of the word *dadeni*. It is followed a few lines later in the text by the phrase *heb enni yn un lle*, ' not to find room (to be contained) anywhere ' referring to the corpses of the men from the Island of the Mighty. It is true that RM has *heb eni*, but this is very hard to justify from the point of view of sense, and most likely the scribe has written *heb eni* while his mind still lingered on the word *dadeni*.[1] The next problem is to decide whether or not *dadeni* and *heb enni* were originally related in form and meaning. If they were, then, in view of the secondary nature of RM, we would be reduced to choosing between *dadeni* and *heb enni* for the erroneous form in WM or its exemplar. Since, however, we have already more or less rejected *heb eni*, this would support the hypothetical form *dadenni*. But this is much too facile. We have no reason to regard *dadeni* and *heb enni* as synonyms and, in any case, the fact remains that the form *dadenni* does

[1] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 209.

not seem to occur, either here or in any later text, whereas *dadeni* is found quite a few times, notably twice in the *Book of the ynchorite*, a compilation of the year 1346. It is clear, therefore, that as far as the evidence goes, the form *dadeni* must be accepted.

The literal meaning is clear. The prefix *dad-* in Modern Welsh normally negatives the word to which it is attached, but formerly, it was used also with the meaning of the English prefix *re-*, as for example, in *dadennyn*, 'rekindle,' or *dadwyrein* 'ascension, resurrection.'[1] The author of *Branwen* may have coined the word *dadeni* on the analogy of such forms, or else he may have merely adapted an older word to his own needs. The second alternative is supported by the instances in the *Book of the Anchorite: wedy y rydadeni*, 'renascentibus' 49.27 and *reit yw idaw y dadeni trwy dwfyr y bedyd* 161.27 from the Gospel of St. John. Here the use of the word conforms more closely to its basic meaning than it does in *Branwen* and consequently it is easier to accept the latter as an adaptation of this usage rather than the reverse. This development of meaning is not so difficult to explain as it might appear at first sight. For instance, the Irish form *aithgein* (*aith-gein*) means originally 're-birth,' but comes naturally to mean the equal of a person or thing (i.e. its renewal or re-incarnation)[2] or 'restitution in kind' in the legal sense,[3] that is to say, the replacement of something that has been lost by its exact equivalent. This semantic change is very close to that implied by the juxtaposition of the instances of *dadeni* in the *Book of the Anchorite* and *Branwen*, and it is quite possible that the latter change had come about independently in Welsh in the period preceding the composition of the *Mabinogi*. If we accept this suggestion, then the usage in *Branwen* requires little further explanation. It means

[1] For the same combination of prepositions as in *dad-* (*to* + *ate*) with similar meaning, cf. in Irish forms like *do.r-ad-chĺuir*, 'rēdemit' Wb. 2b9 and *taid-chor*, 'restoration' Ml. 117b5, 131d12.

[2] Cf. *th'aidgin-siu*, LL 88a 12; *aithghin Móire Muman ar chlú*, 'a second Mór Muman in repute,' *Annals of Loch Cé* s.a. 1527.

[3] Cf. Binchy, *Críth Gablach*, vocab. s.v. *aithgein*.

simply that the writer, having wedded the resuscitation theme to the Otherworld cauldron, chose to designate the latter by the word *dadeni* in its secondary sense of 'renewal.' He was in fact employing the same type of metaphorical turn of speech that we find in the use of the term renaissance (*renascence*) to denote a revival or re-awakening in arts and literature.[1]

### iii. *The Men in the Bags*

When Matholwch and his followers wished to arrange a truce with Bendigeidfran and the men of Britain it occurred to them to undertake to build a house big enough to accommodate him, for never before had he been contained within a house. But the Irish planned a trick. They fixed a peg on either side of each of the hundred pillars that were in the house, and on each peg they hung a hide bag with an armed man inside. Then Efnisien came in ahead of the Britons and noticed the bags. Coming to one of these he asked what

[1] I have earlier (p. 56, n. 1) cited a passage from the Irish *Echtra Cormaic* ('Cormac's Adventure') to show how it or its like might have contributed to the uniting of the Otherworld cauldron and the resuscitation theme. This tale forms part of a longer text which contains a description of a cauldron that was kept in the Tech Midchuarta at Tara and was obviously a version of the Otherworld cauldron. The passage is as follows :

'The nobles of the men of Erin were requesting Cormac to ordain his proper right to every one in Tech Midchuarta. This then was the solution which Cormac invented, namely, to place on the fire the Five-fist Cauldron that was in Tara—it was a *coire aisicain* or *ansirc*—and to put into it swine and beeves, and to sing over it an incantation of lords and poets and wizards. It was a cauldron of this kind that used to be of old in every hostel of the royal hostels of Erin. And this is why it was called *coire aisic* ('cauldron of restitution'), because it used to return and to deliver to every company their suitable food . . . Now each in turn was brought up to that cauldron, and everyone was given a fork-thrust out of it. So then his proper portion came out to each, to wit, a thigh to a king and to a poet . . .' (*Irische Texte III*, 187, 205 ; the translation is by W. Stokes).

There is an indication in Gruffydd's Notes (N.L.W.) that he thought of identifying the Irish *coire aisic* with the Welsh *peir dadeni*. The word *aisec*, meaning 'restitution, restoration,' etc., comes quite close to the secondary sense assigned to *dadeni* in *Branwen*, and it was probably this which suggested the further connection to Gruffydd. The fact is, however, that the context in which the *coire aisic* occurs could not by itself have suggested the revivifying cauldron of the Welsh text, which can be explained satisfactorily otherwise ; nor is the similarity between the meanings of *aisec* and *dadeni*—they are of different formation and by no means synonymous—a sufficient reason for assuming that the usage of the latter was influenced by the former. In any case, as I have tried to show above, the use of *dadeni* in *Branwen* does not require to be explained by external influence.

was in it, and one of the Irish told him that it contained flour. Efnisien felt about it with his hand till he found the head of the warrior inside and then he squeezed till his fingers sank into the brain. In this way he killed all of the two hundred men, whereupon he sang the englyn translated as follows :

> There is in this bag flour of different kinds :
> Champions, warriors, attackers in battle,
> Against fighters, ready for the fray.

Sir Ifor Williams had the idea that the story about the skin or hide bags might have been suggested by the name of the Fir Bolg, one of the early peoples who occupied Ireland according to the *Labor Gabála.*[1] But, while it is true that this was probably one of the associations which the word *bolg* held for the Welsh author, since he evidently knew the *Lebor Gabála,* we can achieve a much closer rapprochement between this story and extant Irish literature. In fact, I believe we can identify its source there.

I have already had occasion to speak of the framework tale called the *Bórama* when discussing the Iron House. The section there in question constitutes the opening of a story called *Cath Belaig Dúin Bolg* or 'The Battle of the Pass of Dún Bolg,' roughly half of the text of the *Bórama.* It is with the main part of this story that I wish to deal now.

We have seen how Cummascach, son of Aed mac Ainmirech, king of Ireland, was slain by Brandub and the Leinstermen (p. 21 f. sup.). To avenge the death of his son Aed marched against Leinster. Brandub sent Aedán, bishop of Glendalough, to ask for a truce, but Aedán was enraged when the king of Ireland made him the butt of a somewhat Rabelaisian joke, if joke it be, and he laid a curse upon Aed which was just as uncouth and certainly not in jest. Then the men of Ireland advanced, bringing Aedán with them. When they reached the pass of Dún Bolg, the king asked what was the name of that *belach* or pass and was told by Aedán that it was the pass of Dún Bolg, i.e. of the

[1] *Pedeir Keinc,* p. 201.

*dún* ('fort,' etc.) of the bags. When asked what bags, he said they were the provision bags of the men of Ireland which would be left that night in the hands of the Leinstermen (or, by the Leinstermen).[1] This convenient interview thus foretells disaster for Aed and his army and anticipates the naming of the site of the conflict.

Then Aedán went to Brandub. The latter sought his counsel and this is the advice he received : 'Set a great royal torch (or candle) outside on the rampart of this fort, and bring together three hundred teams, each of twelve oxen. Put white baskets upon them with many warriors in the baskets and straw over them, and food upon the straw. Get one hundred and fifty unbroken horses and tie bags (*builg*) to their tails filled with stones so as to frighten the horses of the men of Ireland. Let the great torch be before you with the royal cauldron about it until you shall reach the middle of the camp of the men of Ireland. Send messengers meanwhile to the king of Ireland and say that the food of Leinster will be brought to him tonight.'

Eventually (I omit the irrelevant parts of the narrative) the preparations were completed and Brandub advanced with his force. They were met bʎ the men of Airgialla, who challenged them, but explained that they were the camp-servants of the Leinstermen bringing food to the king of Ireland. Then the men of Airgialla felt the baskets and perceived nothing but pork and beef, and so they allowed the company to pass. The Leinstermen came to the middle of the camp and there removed the cauldron from the torch. The oxen were unloaded and the horses turned loose among those of the men of Ireland, so that they stampeded, causing destruction to the encampment. Out of the baskets leaped the hidden warriors, grasping their sword-hilts and the handles (?) of their shields and (with their heads encased) in the helmets of their hauberks.

[1] If we accept the suggested variant to Stokes' and O'Grady's translation, we have a veiled reference to the 'provisions' brought that night by the Leinstermen to the camp of the king of Ireland (see inf.). This suggestion is made rather more plausible in view of the fact that it is Aedán who suggests the later ruse to Brandub, and that this suggestion follows closely on the above passage.

Thus were the men of Ireland put to flight, and soon after their king was slain.[1]

As I have mentioned before, there is little doubt that the *Bórama* is early enough to have been known to the author of *Branwen*. Not only that, but it is very likely that this section existed as an independent tale before being incorporated in the longer text.[2] With regard to content the Welsh and Irish narratives are similar enough as they stand to warrant our comparing them, keeping in mind the alterations which would be inevitable in the Welsh text, if it really were a borrowing.

In the first place it is clear that the Irish tale summarized above was meant to explain the place-name Dún Bolg. As the actual narrative of the main incident stands, however, this is obscured a little, for the men are hidden in the baskets, not in the bags. Of course, it is true that the bags of stones attached to the horses' tails would be a sufficient link with the place-name for most onomastic story-tellers, yet one cannot help wondering whether there was not possibly another version of the tale where the men were hidden in the bags. However, this is mere surmise, useless as such and unnecessary because the onomastic associations attached to the word *bolg* or ' bag ' in the Irish tale are unmistakable. At the same time, it would seem that the writer of the *Bórama* found his mind running in the same direction as mine, for, early in the tale, as mentioned above, he gives an explanation of the place-name Dún Bolg, which refers *bolg* (g.pl.) to the provision bags of the men of Ireland. Either this alludes to the trick played by Brandub, in which case the writer is substituting the bags for the baskets of the later narrative, or else it refers merely to the paraphernalia left behind by the men of Ireland in their flight, in which case the writer feels that the connection between

[1] RC XIII, 64-95 : *Silva Gadelica* I, 374-81 ; II, 411-18. In Dillon's *The Cycle of the Kings*, p. 107 ff., there is a convenient summary, part of which I have utilized in the above account.

[2] One might infer this from the *Bórama* itself. Actually an independent version of the tale is found in *The Yellow Book of Lecan* (ed. Maniet, *Éigse* VII, 95 ff.), but this is not so complete and is in some ways less satisfactory than the *Bórama* version.

the bags of stones and the place-name was not sufficiently explicit. Whichever alternative we choose, it is clear that the person responsible for this onomastic explanation regarded the story of the battle as providing an elucidation of the place-name Dún Bolg and felt that this onomastic element was not sufficiently stressed in the account of the actual battle.

The onomastic nature of the tale would have been at least as obvious to the author of *Branwen* as it is to us. It follows that to him, as to us, the *builg* (or bags) constituted a dominant and distinctive element in the text, and this is sufficient to explain why he substituted the bags for the baskets as the hiding place of the armed men. Besides, we must take into account the context of the Welsh tale. In the *Bórama* the ruse was put into effect in the open, whereas in *Branwen* the situation is indoors in the great hall built for Bendigeidfran. This transposition is inevitably accompanied by other changes. The horses with the bags of stones attached to their tails must go, and so must the oxen which bore the baskets with their dangerous provisions. Thus, of the central incident all the trappings are lost except the baskets, for which the bags are substituted probably in view of their onomastic importance in the Irish text.[1] But, when we take into consideration these inevitable alterations and the fact that, in the nature of things, the ruse must fail in the Welsh version, the similarity between the two narratives is striking. Certain minor features underline this. For instance, in both the contents of the bags (baskets) are suspected by one or more of the enemy, who feel about with their hands to make sure, although with different results. In *Branwen* a peg is fixed in either side of every pillar in the house and a bag containing an armed man is attached to each peg. In the *Bórama* the corresponding baskets are placed on oxen, and obviously this implies the normal arrangement of panniers slung one

[1] It is also quite possible that the Welsh author was influenced to some extent by Welsh place-names containing the word *Bol*, especially those occurring in the district with which *Branwen* was associated (cf. I. Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 178 f., 201 f.).

on each side of the animal. Now, supposing that one had to replace the animal by some item from the interior of a great hall, could one possibly cleave more closely to the original than has the author of *Branwen*? Again, in the Welsh text Efnisien comes to the last of the two hundred concealed warriors and finds that this one has armour on his head, but he kills him just as he did all the others. Is this a possible echo, with effective elaboration, of the reference in the Irish text to the hidden warriors wearing armour?

As I have mentioned already, the Welsh story-teller had to alter the issue of the deception incident. If the ruse had succeeded, as in the *Bórama*, he could not have followed it up with the series of events which he planned to include. Thus Efnisien is made to kill the two hundred warriors and sing his punning *englyn*, while the Irishman who was by him either did not notice what was going on or else, for some strange unknown reason, held his peace. Thereupon the Irish and British warriors entered the house, 'and as soon as they were seated there was concord between them.' In this way the story-teller re-confirms the state of truce which had followed upon the building of the house and deliberately stresses the fact that the bag trick did not leave any aftermath of ill-will. This is necessary for what is to follow, but it requires that Efnisien's friends must remain unaware of the Irish deception, and that the Irish themselves must ignore the unexplained inactivity of their hidden men; in fact that not a single allusion should be made to the incident throughout the remainder of the tale. This would be an amazing inconsistency in a normally developed narrative, but here it represents the price the author had to pay for the inclusion of the varied materials which he wished to make use of. At the cost of this *non sequitur* he succeeds both in including the deception incident and in preserving a concord between the hosts which is broken only by Efnisien's thrusting Gwern, son of Matholwch and Branwen, into the fire; which in turn leads to the resuscitation motif also borrowed from Irish. The author had need of only one conflict, and it is there-

fore appropriate in a way that it is Efnisien who prevents the ruse of the hidden warriors leading to fighting, since it is he who later instigates the hostilities thus delayed.

Finally, it may be asked why the pork and beef of the Irish tale have been transformed into flour in *Branwen*. The arrangement whereby bags of flour are hung about the hall does not seem a particularly appropriate or convenient one, but we can explain them in two ways. In the first place the substitution enables the story-teller to effect his rather elaborate pun, which is based upon the use of an older *englyn* that may have been originally quite independent of the Branwen story and contains the word *blawt* ('flour'). Secondly, in the *Bórama* the foodstuffs are intended to appear as provisions for a feast, but in *Branwen* there is no mention of a feast, and therefore the supposed contents of the bags are reduced to a merely mechanical function in the tale. They cannot be omitted, although they are embarrassingly unjustifiable otherwise.

The *englyn* just referred to itself presents a minor problem. The translation given above is based on the manuscript reading from WM and RM, which is as follows :

*Ỳssit yn y boly hwnn amryw ulawt,*
*Keimeit, kynniuyeit, disgynneit yn trin,*
*Rac kydwyr cad barawt.*

Sir Ifor Williams suggests that the metrical structure and the sense could be improved by reading in the first line *Ỳssit yn y byly hyn blawt*, 'There is flour in these bags.'[1] As it stands it refers to only one bag, and we know from the preceding passage that there is only one warrior in each ; yet the three nouns in the second line are in the plural. But if we decide to accept the manuscript reading *amryw ulawt*, which certainly adds to the effectiveness of the pun, then we must omit the demonstrative *hyn*. There is, however, one other point to be kept in mind while considering these possible emendations. The *englyn* appears to be considerably older than its prose context, and Sir Ifor Williams' excellent suggestions are based upon the

[1] *Ped. Keinc*, p. 203 f.

assumption that it always referred to the episode of the bags in the tale of *Branwen*. But it would follow from this that the episode in question, embodying the borrowing from Irish, was already in the Welsh tale at a comparatively early date. However, as will become clear in the course of this study, it is unlikely that the majority of the Irish borrowings in *Branwen* can be dated earlier than the second half of the eleventh century, and so, if we assume the original relevance of the *englyn* to its present context, the case for an Irish borrowing is correspondingly weakened. This consideration cannot be ignored, but neither should the assumption upon which it rests be taken for granted. In the first place, the internal evidence suggests very strongly that this section of the Welsh tale incorporates Irish material, and, secondly, there is no reason why the author of *Branwen* should not have employed a completely un-related *englyn* because he saw that it might be adapted effectively to the narrative of his tale. It is perhaps significant that the first line of the *englyn* as it stands is so unsatisfacory : it may well be due to the tampering of the author in his effort to accommodate it to its context.[1]

### iv. *The Great House*

The last section dealt with events which took place within the house built for Bendigeidfran. In this one it is the house itself we shall consider. The Irish, we are told, wished to placate Bendigeidfran and to persuade him to make peace. They knew that he had never been contained in a house, so they decided to build one such that he and his followers might be contained in the one half, and Matholwch and the Irish in the other. And so it was built big and spacious with one hundred pillars. When the hosts

[1] To insert an earlier fragment of poetry in a completely new setting is nothing very unusual, and we do not have to proceed far afield in search of another instance. We have been discussing the battle of Dún Bolg in which Aed mac Ainmirech, the king of Ireland, was slain. In several of the Annals and in the *Bórama* account of the battle (RC XIII, 94) his death is mourned in a quatrain referring expressly to him, but this quatrain is found, with the appropriate variation, as part of a complete poem lamenting the death of a certain Illann mac Scanláin in the text called *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (*Anecdota from Ir. MSS.* I, 12).

entered the house, the Britons came in on one side and the Irish on the other.

Sir Ifor Williams cites the *Tech Midchuarta* (lit. 'The House of Meadcircuit') at Tara as described by Hyde in his *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 127, and regards the house in *Branwen* as a reminiscence of this.[1] I believe this opinion to be correct, but with certain reservations and subject to a certain amount of elaboration. The relevant part of Hyde's account was based upon a poem from the metrical recension of the historico-topographical compilation called the *Dindshenchas* and a corresponding piece from the prose recension,[2] and since he does not bring out fully what is for us the most important attribute of the hall at Tara, namely its size, I shall assemble briefly some of the details. It was, says the poem, seven hundred feet in length and thirty cubits in height. It had thrice fifty bed-chambers (*imda*) with thrice fifty (*v.l.* fifty) heroes in each, and thrice fifty 'couches' (*?airél*) with fifty men to each. Seven cubits was the measure of the hearth, and twice seven were the doors in number. There was a vessel of vast capacity from which three hundred cupbearers dispensed liquor. There were fifty cooks, fifty stewards, and so on. All together the household numbered thirty thousand, and apparently this did not include servants and attendants!

Another account of this hall is found in a text entitled *Suidigud Tige Midchuarda* ('The Ordering of Tech M.'),[3] but in all probability one of the two descriptions derives from the other. The interesting thing about *Suidigud T.M* is that it is accompanied by a plan of the hall, providing a sketch of seating arrangements. Again, in the story of *Fled Bricrenn* ('The Feast of Briciu') it is told how Bricriu Nemthenga ('B. Poison-tongue') held a great feast for Conchobar King of Ulster and all his followers. He had a spacious house built for the occasion (and in this it resembles the house built specially for Bendigeidfran),

[1] *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 200.

[2] The poem is in the *Metrical Dind.*, ed. E. Gwynn, I, 28; the prose in RC XV, 282 f., 287.

[3] LL 29 a; LBL 418 a (with plan of Tech M. on lower part of the page).

after the likeness of the hall at Emain Macha, capital of Ulster, according to one place in the text, and on the plan of the Tech Midchuarta according to another a few lines later.[1] In any case the description of this building, with its splendid pillars and frontings, its carving and lintel-work, and its ornament in gold and silver, is how one author summarizes the account of the hall *par excellence* as accepted in Old and Middle-Irish literature. Later in the same text there is a shorter description of the royal hall of Ailill and Medb at Cruachain in Connacht, and 'such was the spaciousness of the house,' we are told, 'that it had room for the hosts of valiant heroes of the whole province in the retinue of Conchobar.'[2]

Edward Gwynn, the editor of the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, showed that the description of the Tech Midchuarta at Tara, as given in the Dindshenchas and in the *Suidigud T.M.*, was probably influenced in certain points of detail by the biblical description of Solomon's House and Temple, but at the same time he accepted that a genuine tradition underlay the literary accounts of Tara.[3] Although in the present context it does not really matter very much to us either way, since the important point to know is that the description of a royal Hall of immense size was something of a vogue in early Irish literature, nevertheless it is worth noting that the extant material evidence confirms the broad outline of the hall at Tara as depicted in literary sources. For instance the remains which Petrie identified as those of the Tech Midchuarta measured 759 feet as compared with the 700 feet of the Dindshenchas. All the available evidence, archaeological, antiquarian and literary, combines to give a reasonably consistent picture of the substantial Irish house of early centuries. It was long, had a nave in the centre flanked on each side by an aisle, or, as in the case of the Tech Midchuarta, by two aisles. These aisles were

[1] *Fled Bricrend*, ed. G. Henderson, p. 1.

[2] op cit., pp. 68, 70 ; cf. the description of the hall at Cruachain as found in *Táin Bó Fraích* ('The Reiving of the Cattle of Fraech)', ed. Byrne and Dillon, §. 7 ; transl. Dillon, *Ét. Celt.* II, 3.

[3] op cit., I, 70-4.

formed by two, or four, rows of pillars supporting the roof and were partitioned off into cubicles, which, it would appear from the various references in the literature, performed the double function of couches and of bed-chambers. The nave remained an open space wherein was set the hearth (or hearths), the candelabra of the torches and the vessels of food and drink, and presumably facilitated passage from one part of the house to another. I might add here that the authorities are agreed that a similar type of house existed in Wales.[1] But, apart from the fact that *Branwen* places Bendigeidfran's house in Ireland, we must remember with I. A. Richmond that 'the remarkable feature of Cormac's Mead-Hall (i.e. the *Tech Midchuarta*) is not its plan, but its scale, and it is this which impresses us still.' Certainly it was this impression which the medieval Irish literati and story-tellers sought to give when speaking of the hall at Tara or of the other great halls mentioned in their tales. It would appear that the author of *Branwen* was one of the people suitably impressed.

Now let us consider how this arrangement conforms to the few details of Bendigeidfran's house given in *Branwen*. It had one hundred pillars. The fire was in such a position that Efnisien was able to seize Gwern and thrust him into it without hindrance, which would be consistent with its being in the middle of the house in a place reasonably free from impediments. The men of Ireland came into the house on the one side, and the men of Britain on the other. Again, this is consistent with the plan of the Irish house, where the accommodation was divided into two blocks by the intervening nave. There is in fact in extant Irish literature a close parallel to the wide separation of the warriors in *Branwen*. In *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* ('The Tidings of Mac Dathó's Pig') the warriors of Ulster and Connacht, the two provinces whose mutual hostility is the main theme of the Ulster Cycle, come together to the hostel

[1] Cf. I. A. Richmond, 'The Irish analogies for the Romano-British Barn Dwelling,' *Journ. of Roman Stud.* XXII, 96 ff. : R. A. S. Macalister, *Tara*, pp. 60-9 ; *The Archaelogy of Ireland*, pp. 295-8 : I. C. Peate, *The Welsh House*, chapter VI, 'The House of the Welsh Laws.'

of Mac Dathó. The text tells us that ' they all entered the hostel then, the men of Connacht occupying one half of the house and the Ulstermen the other half.'[1] What is even more interesting is the fact that this tale, dating from about 800 A.D., goes on to describe a fight inside the hostel. At first the old enemies are at peace, albeit an uneasy peace, but soon they begin to quarrel as to which warrior will have the honour of carving Mac Dathó's pig. Finally the Ulsterman Conall Cernach wins this privilege, but when he sets about distributing the portions of the huge porker, he blatantly skimps the share going to the Connachtmen, and the trouble commences immediately : ' They rose up, and the Ulstermen rose up, so that they all came to grips (lit. ' so that everyone reached the other '). Then it was a case of ' blow over ear,' until the heaping (of bodies) on the floor was as high as the side of the house and streams of blood were flowing through the doorways. Then the host burst through the doorways and performed a good drinking-ground[2] with each one hewing the other.' In the end Mac Dathó's great hound attacks the Connachtmen and they are forced to flee.

The pattern of this narrative is quite similar to that of the conflict in *Branwen* ; the entrance of the two hosts, each occupying one side of the hall ; the sudden eruption of fighting, although due to different causes ; the almost indescribable clamour and confusion ; the pile of bodies ; and, finally, the flight or escape of what might be termed the foreign host (for it is to be kept in mind that *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* belongs to the Ulster Cycle). In WM the sentence describing the opening of the fight is as follows : *Ac yna, ymgyuot o bawb ar hyt y ty,* ' And then they all rose up throughout the house.' This might be a paraphrase of the corresponding sentence in the Irish text : *At-ragat sidi, at-ragat dano Ulaid, co-rroacht cách araile,* ' They rose up, and the

[1] Ed. Thurnseysen, § 5 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales,* p. 201.

[2] This is the story-teller's rather indelicate way of referring to the mutual killing of Mac Dathó's guests. It must have been a little too unconventional for later transcribers, who interpreted the text to suit their own, less original, tastes.

Ulstermen rose up, until they all reached one another.' Here the verb is used first of the Connachtmen and then of the Ulstermen, and it is an unnecessary repetition which is justified by the preceding sentence in *Scéla M.M.D.*, but would not be similarly justified in *Branwen.* Like the related verb *con-érig, at-reig* (*-raig*) occurs in early Irish with the more extended meaning of ' to rise and make for, to rise to attack,' and is found not infrequently in contexts like that of *Scéla M.M.D.*[1] The Welsh *ymgyuot* has sometimes the same extension of meaning, but, if I am correct in suggesting that it is here an echo of the Irish verb *at-ragat,* then it is clear that the person responsible for the RM reading *ymgyuoc* (<*cyfogi*, ' to fight ')[2] felt that the verb in his examplar was too ambiguous.[3] The remainder of the Welsh sentence describing the opening of the fight is a paraphrase of the second half of the Irish sentence. It states explicity what is implicit in the latter, the movement of the warriors from one side of the house to the other as each man sought to reach his opposite. Thus, the whole sentence in *Branwen* might well be half translation, half adaptation of the corresponding Irish sentence.

Finally I might sum up as follows, but without any claim to detailed accuracy with regard to order and sequence of suggestion, the manner in which the author constructed the great house episode in *Branwen* : He intended using an earlier Welsh tradition of an expedition to Ireland from which only seven men returned (cf. p. 146 ff. inf.). This suggested a fierce conflict. He was already drawing upon TBDD, of which the story was located at one of the five great *bruidne* or hostels of tradition. Another of these was the *bruiden* of Mac Dathó, in which was situated the story of *Scéla M.M.D.*, described by Thurneysen as ' one of the best told of Old Irish sagas.' Most of the action of this

[1] E.g. *Mesca Ulad*, ed. Watson, ll. 161, 852, *at-raachtatar ara n-armaib*, ' they arose and made for their arms.'

[2] CF. I. Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 206 f.

[3] Moreover, if we wish to split hairs, we can note the inconsistency of the RM reading, which speaks of the men fighting, although it is followed by two references to ' everyone ' taking up his arms.

tale, including the battle, takes place inside the *bruiden*, and this setting was taken over by our author. But, of course, the immediate cause of the fighting in *Scéla M.M.D.* was an incident characteristic of an heroic society and one which could not possibly be joined to the *Branwen* context, both because there had been no leading up to such a climax, and because its primitive character would have jarred against the comparatively romantic and sophisticated atmosphere prevailing in the Welsh tale. The author discarded this incident, therefore, and replaced it by one concerning Efnisien and Gwern which explained the outbreak of fighting just as effectively and had the added advantage of linking the whole episode more closely to the central Welsh characters and ascribing to them the dictation of events.

It is certain that he was familiar with the traditional conception of the great *bruidne* or hostels. He had a vivid mental picture of the hostels of Da Derga and of Mac Dathó, which were in origin nothing more or less than the Celtic Otherworld, but which were visualized as huge houses constructed on the pattern of the great halls of the kings, and especially of the Tech Midchuarta, the royal hall of Cormac mac Airt, king of Ireland, which was renowned for its immensity. He saw the house of his story as a synthesis emerging from the descriptions of the buildings he was familiar with in Irish literature. He was impressed, or at least influenced, by the megalomania of these descriptions, and hit upon the idea of utilizing it in his narrative : Bendigeidfran on account of his huge size had never been contained in a house, and so the Irish built one big enough, not only for him, but also for the rest of the Britons and the Irish. Whether Bendigeidfran's great stature was already part of Welsh tradition, or whether it sprang from the story-teller's reaction to the Irish material he employed, is a question we can afford to leave aside for the moment (cf. 130 inf.). Next, the Welsh author proceeded to link his narrative to the earlier tradition of an expedition to Ireland by introducing, rather baldly, the saying attributed to Morddwyd Tyllion (cf. p. 162 ff. inf.).

After this he inserted his adapted version of the resuscitation theme, but keeping in mind all the while the scene depicted in *Scéla M.M.D.*, with its great heap of bodies inside the house. So it is that Efnisien, on looking at the corpses of his dead countrymen, is overcome by a very opportune, if somewhat unlikely, wave of remorse and sacrifices himself in order to destroy the revivifying cauldron of the Irish. This is all sublimely convenient ; not only does it remove from the scene Efnisien who presumably was not one of those associated with the earlier expedition to Ireland, but it also enables the story-teller to make use of the resuscitation theme, while at the same time nullifying the consequences which follow in the Irish instances, so that in his version the Irish are all slain, and remain so, and the afore-mentioned seven Britons escape to vindicate tradition, and thereby Branwen is provided with a situation in which she may appropriately break her heart and die. From beginning to end this little section of *Branwen* demonstrates very clearly its author's gift of improvisation and arrangement.

v. *Efnisien*

In *Branwen* the situations are more important than the characters, and it is probably because the fate of the lady Branwen is so bound up with and determined by the situations of the tale that we come to feel her tragedy as dominating the whole narrative. It is her passivity rather than her personality that makes her memorable. After her the next most important character in *Branwen* is undoubtedly Efnisien, the only one the author has sought to endow with a personality. Unlike Branwen, it is the positiveness and assertiveness of his character which give him importance, for where she is a victim of circumstance he dominates it. Of course, to some extent this is due to the fact that the story-teller is obliged to make Efnisien act in this or that manner in order to create continuity and unity in materials borrowed from different sources.

Efnisien and his brother Nisien, we are told, were the sons of Euroswydd and their mother was Penarddun daughter of

Beli son of Mynogan. Thus they were brothers on the mother's side to Bendigeidfran and Manawydan. But, though Nisien and Efnisien were full brothers in kin, they were opposites in character : 'And one of those youths was a good youth ; he would make peace between the two hosts when their wrath was at the highest : that was Nisien. The other would cause strife between the two brothers when they were most loving.' The first instance of Efnisien's ill-disposition comes after Branwen has been given to Matholwch. When he hears the news he is furious and sets to mutilating Matholwch's horses. This comes to Matholwch's ears and he is about to leave for home as a protest against such a gratuitous insult when Bendigeidfran explains his innocence. But even then it requires much parleying and the gift of the magic cauldron (with the tale of its origin appended) before Matholwch's feelings are assuaged. Later, in the episode set in Bendigeidfran's house, it is Efnisien who orders the course of events through his perverse behaviour. This is, of course, the pivotal episode in *Branwen*, and the various materials it contains are manipulated by the author to lead up to a conclusion completely unrelated to them until then. In short, Efnisien is absolutely essential to the structure and motivation of the events in *Branwen*.

The question we may ask ourselves is : Did the story-teller invent the character of Efnisien, find him as an already extant figure in Welsh tradition, or borrow him from Irish literature. Supposing that we were not aware of the story-teller's debt to Irish tales throughout the rest of *Branwen*, we should then have little right to argue the third of these possibilities. But, even in that case, we should be fully justified in comparing the character in Irish tradition whom Efnisien immediately brings to mind, namely Bricriu Nemthenga ('B. Poison-tongue').

Bricriu features regularly in the tales of the Ulster Cycle. He and his double, who is named Dubthach Dael Ulad ('D. the Beetle of the Ulstermen') or Dubthach Daeltenga ('D. Beetle-tongue'), play a waspish vindictive role. One, or both, of them is always present in the company of

Conchobar, the king of Ulster, and his noble heroes, and always ready to seize any opportunity of setting their companions at variance. Their barbed tongues, which gave them their epithets, are responsible for much dissension among the Ulstermen and often their perverse interventions seem to be on the point of causing complete chaos and destruction ; but, fortunately, there is an ever-present countering influence which is as potent for peace as their's is for strife. This is the gentle Sencha mac Ailella, who succeeds by a word or a gesture in soothing the enraged feelings of Conchobar's retinue.

Bricriu (and his double Dubthach) is an extremely important figure in the *dramatis personae* of the Ulster Cycle, and by virtue of this he figures in most of the individual tales. But, for our purpose, it will be wiser to confine ourselves to tales which we have reason to think were used by the author of *Branwen* as sources of raw material. First there is *Scéla M.M.D.*, from which, it has been suggested, the central episode of the fight has been borrowed and adapted by the Welsh story-teller. In this text Bricriu intervenes only once, but his contribution is typical and is timed to have the greatest possible effect. From this point of view it is completely successful, for the whole disagreement and conflict about the right to carve Mac Dathó's pig—that is to say, the greater part of the text—springs from Bricriu's few provocative words :

> ' It is a fine pig,' said Conchobar. ' It is in truth,' said Ailill, ' How shall the pig be divided, O Conchobar ?' ' How else indeed,' said Bricriu mac Carbaid, speaking down from his cubicle, ' here where the warriors of the men of Ireland are, other than to divide it by contests of arms ? And indeed every one of you has cracked the other over the nose before now.'[1]

Immediately the fat is in the fire.

However, the text we must turn to for a complete picture of Bricriu in his characteristic role is *Fled Bricrenn* (' The Feast of Bricriu '), which contains also what is probably

[1] Ed. Thurneysen, § 6 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 202.

one of the main prototypes of the monstrous Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid in *Branwen*. The story-teller to whom we owe *Fled Bricrenn* decided to depart from the usual run of tales and use Bricriu, not as an incidental character, however important, but as the character responsible for setting the story in motion and then keeping it so. This may be seen in the following brief summary :

In the great house he built to receive the Ulstermen Bricriu had his cubicle (*imdae*) divided from the rest of the house because he knew they would not suffer him to remain together with them. When he first invites them they refuse, saying, ' We will not go, for, if we go to partake of his feast, our dead will outnumber our living, after Bricriu has set us one against the other.' But Bricriu does not give in quite so easily. He threatens that, if they do not come, he will cause trouble among them : ' I will stir up strife among the kings, leaders, heroes and lesser nobles, till they will slay one another, if they do not come with me to share my feast . . . I will cause enmity between father and son so that they will kill each other. But if that be not possible, I will set mother and daughter at variance.[1] And, if that be not possible, I will cause strife between the two breasts of every woman in Ulster, so that they will smite each other till they rot and putrify in consequence.' His threat does not fall on deaf ears, and the Ulstermen accept his invitation, but decide to seek sureties from him and to see that he leaves the house at the commencement of the feast. However, Bricriu still succeeds in working mischief. He speaks to three of the great Ulster heroes, Loegaire Buadach, Conall Cernach and Cú Chulainn, in turn, impressing on each his right to the Champion's Portion (*curad-mír*) at the feast. When this trickery results in the heroes

[1] Cf. *Branwen*, where it is said of Efnisien that he ' would cause strife between (the) two brothers when they were most loving ' (*A'r neill o'r gueisson hynny, gwas da oed : ef a barei tangneued y rwg y deu lu, ban uydynt lidyawcaf : sef oed hwnnw Nissyen. Y llall a barei ymlad y rwng y deu uroder, ban uei uwyaf yd ymgerynt*). Ifor Williams regards this as an allusion to Bendigeidfran and Manawydan (*Ped. Keinc*, p. 164), but it would probably be more satisfactory to accept it as a reference of a general nature, similiar to those in *Fled Bricrenn*. The same applies to the mention of the two hosts. In both cases the article would be used generically rather than to particularize.

resorting to arms to settle their differences, it is only through the intervention of Sencha mac Ailella, the wise counsellor of the Ulstermen, that peace is temporarily restored. Next Bricriu goes to the wives of the three heroes and convinces each of them of her right to precedence over the other two. This results in an undignified scramble on the part of the noble ladies, with their menfolk joining in to offer support, but the uproar and incipient conflict is once again quelled by Sencha. However, it is not long before there is a heated argument and Sencha must come yet once more to the rescue. He shakes the *craíb Sencha* (' the Branch of Sencha '), which immediately soothes and quietens the rowdy company. The rest of the tale relates a series of events having little direct connection with Bricriu and Sencha.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how similar is the character of Bricriu to that of Efnisien in the light of these citations. The latter's role in *Branwen* is Bricriu's in the Ulster tales. At first sight this parallel may appear not quite exact, for is it not a fact that Efnisien repents and sacrifices himself to make good the wrong he has done, and who could imagine Bricriu doing the like ? But, as I have pointed out earlier, Efnisien's repentance and death solve a number of difficulties for the author of *Branwen* and their invention is very probably to be attributed to him, in which case the parallel between Bricriu and Efnisien is almost perfect. Moreover, there is some reason to believe that the author of *Branwen* was familiar with *Fled Bricrenn* as well as with *Scéla M.M.D.* And so the point to consider is this : Would it be possible for the twelfth-century Welsh story-teller to know *Fled Bricrenn* and to draw upon it while writing *Branwen*, and yet to create the character of Efnisien for this latter tale independently of the role given to Bricriu in the Irish text. The answer seems obvious.

With regard to the names of the brothers Nisien and Efnisien the former is known as the name of a Welsh saint, the patron of Llanishen in Glamorgan, and it seems to be generally accepted that the latter is formed from it by the addition of the negative prefix, the resulting name relating

itself semantically to the word *efnys*, 'hostile, enemy' (Ir. *amnas*).[1] This explains the origin of the two names, but not of the characters to whom they belong. It is true that Nisien has some connection with earlier tradition, but there is no evidence whatever that Efnisien existed before the writing of *Branwen*. If his name is derived from that of the Welsh saint, then it might have been applied to him at any time subsequent to the lifetime of the holy Nisien, but it might on the other hand be no earlier than *Branwen*. The position is therefore that Welsh has no forerunner for Efnisien, whereas Irish has an extremely close parallel which was well known to the Welsh story-teller when he set to depicting his character. In *Branwen* the two contrasting characters are mentioned together at the outset, so that the goodness of one offsets the perversity of the other, while in *Fled Bricrenn* as in other tales of the Ulster cycle the wise and gentle Sencha is placed in juxtaposition to Bricriu. We are told that Nisien 'would make peace between the two hosts when their wrath was at its highest,' and this statement, lacking as it does any confirmatory context in *Branwen*, is an exact description of Sencha's function in a number of Irish tales, in token of which he is called *fer sídaighi sluaig Ulad*, 'the pacifier of the Ulster warriors.' In these Irish tales Bricriu and Sencha are closely related and, to a large extent, mutually dependent characters,[2] and it is as such that I suggest they were borrowed—if borrowed be the correct word for this sort of adaptation—by the author of *Branwen*. At the outset he attached them as half-brothers to Bendigeidfran and Manawydan, the sons of Llŷr, and pointed the contrast between them (as Thurneysen has done less dramatically in the sober comment quoted), and in this way he succeeded at once and without undue elaboration in impressing on his readers

[1] I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 163 ; W. J. Gruffydd, *Math*, p. 188 n.

[2] Cf. *Heldensage*, p. 93 f. : 'Scharf charakterisiert ist dagegen Bricriu . . . Seine Tätigkeit und seine Freude ist, überall Streit zu erregen und Unfrieden zu stiften. Eine Dublette zu ihm ist Dubthach Dael Ulad . . . Ihr Gegenstück ist der alte Sencha mac Ailella, der Nestor und weise Ratgeber, der immer und meist mit Erfolg bemüht ist, den Frieden und die Ruhe wiederherzustellen.'

the basic trait in Efnisien's character. On the other hand the nature of the narrative as it took shape in his mind had no need of, and in fact no room for, the counteracting influence of Nisien as it might have been drawn from the role of Sencha in *Fled Bricrenn*, for, where the latter was intended to prevent the unfortunate consequences of Bricriu's behavour, Efnisien was cast as the effective instrument of cruel fate. To avert the disaster would have been to undo the tale. Where *Fled Bricrenn* is largely comedy, *Branwen* is predominantly tragic. In point of atmosphere and intent its closest kinship is with *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, and the treatment of the borrowing from *Fled Bricrenn* must be envisaged in this light.

vi *Further Possible Derivations from TBDD*

The nature of the material in *Branwen* of which TBDD may be regarded with confidence as the source is such as to warrant the assumption that the Welsh story-teller was particularly impressed and influenced in his work by this tale. I must confess that, were it not for this consideration, probably I should never have entertained the idea of treating the following elements of *Branwen* as possible derivations from TBDD. However, that in itself is no argument against their being so, since it is only when our attention has once been drawn to the derivative aspect of the former tale by rather obvious instances that we become sufficiently familiar with its author's methods to perceive the more unobtrusive and better assimilated borrowings. The points I have noted are :

(a) *The sojourn at Gwales* :

When the survivors of the battle in Ireland returned to Britain bearing the head of Bendigeidfran, they came first to Harddlech and then to Gwales in Penfro in accordance with his instructions : 'And at Gwales in Penfro you will be fourscore years ; and until you open the door towards Aber Henfelen, the side facing Cornwall, you may bide there, and the head with you uncorrupted. But from the time you have opened that door, you may not bide there ; make for London to bury the head.' So it transpired.

When they came into the great hall at Gwales, they saw two doors open and a third closed, that facing towards Cornwall. But, when they had passed fourscore years there free from care and the memory of sorrow, one of their number, Heilyn son of Gwyn, one day decided to open the third door to test the truth of what they had heard concerning it. Once he had opened it and looked on Cornwall and Aber Henfelen, they all became conscious of every loss and affliction they had suffered, and from that moment they could not rest, but must set out for London.

This part of *Branwen* takes us from the story-teller's pseudo-historical world to the Otherworld of perpetual youth and plenty and happiness, a sudden transition which is not unusual in Celtic literature. It is perhaps also the part which shows to best advantage the author's peculiar skill and sensitivity to atmosphere. In comparison with some of the descriptions of the Otherworld in early Irish literature, it might seem at first glance little more than a bare and soulless outline. But it must be kept in mind that our author was writing for a public almost certainly possessing a considerable acquaintance with learned and popular traditions of the Otherworld, and, being aware of this predisposition or susceptibility, he would seem to have chosen merely to set the spark of suggestion to it and allow the personal reaction and the imagination of his readers to do the rest. To say this may be to read too much into the story-teller's ordering of his text, but, on the other hand, how is one to distinguish in a work of literature between result and intention? In the case of *Branwen*, instead of giving himself free rein on the rich and enticing subject of the happy Otherworld, the writer has adopted a restrained impressionistic approach similar in many ways to that of the early Celtic nature poets, who relied on implication rather than on description, and thereby endowed their work with a lasting freshness and an enduring power of suggestion.

In the extremely brief account of Harddlech there is little but the mention of a couple of the main characteristics of the traditional Otherworld, the plentiful supply of meat and drink and the entrancing song of the birds which

could be heard in all its clarity even though the birds themselves could only barely be seen far out over the sea. The passage on Gwales adds to these characteristics and re-emphasizes them : it was a place of joy and of plenty in which no one had any memory of his past sorrows nor any perception of the passing of time. So far the elements of the Otherworld scene mentioned by the writer are in themselves conventional enough ; but to them he adds something which appears to be peculiar to his account. The hall in which the heroes found themselves had one of its three doors closed, and to open this door and look in that direction was forbidden to them, under the pain of losing the pleasures of the Otherworld and being subjected once more to the ravages of time. But one of their number did open it and look towards Aber Henfelen, and immediately their period of happiness and immunity came to an end.

I can recall no Otherworld sequence quite like this in the remainder of early Celtic literature. The basic elements are common enough—the Otherworld was sometimes presented as a wonderful house or mansion, from which the mortal visitant might be restored summarily to his normal state, as was Cormac mac Airt from the residence of Manannán mac Lir[1]—but I can think of no other instance where the duration of the sojourn in the security of the Otherworld depended on the mortal respecting such an arbitrary and, in relation to its general context, such an irrelevant prohibition. There is, of course, the common folklore motif of The One Forbidden Thing, that is, the one thing a person may not do, although free to do everything else. This sometimes refers to a particular door which must not be opened ; but it is important to note that in such instances the door is regarded as an entrance to a chamber etc., and that the person who opens it does in fact enter. In *Branwen*, on the other hand, the thing really forbidden is to look through the door-way, not to pass through it. It is clear therefore that the folklore motif is not sufficient to explain the prohibition in the Welsh text.

[1] IT III, 198, 216.

It is here, sense and instinct combine to tell us, that the hand of the author has been at work, re-ordering and re-moulding ; and if that be the case, we must then attribute the peculiarities of this passage in *Branwen* to his invention or to his adaptation of material in one of the sources from which he quarried so industriously. But the impression gradually emerging from our examination of his text—and it will be confirmed in the following pages—is that he was not given to inventing ; his method was to form something new by re-casting bits and pieces from earlier literature and tradition. We are, therefore, justified in examining in this connection a text which, as I have argued, he made use of elsewhere in his tale, namely TBDD. First of all it will be necessary to cite several passages from it :

In l.172 of Miss Knott's edition there is given a list of Conaire's *gesa* (that is the taboos to which he is subject). These *gesa* are extremely important, for as they are unavoidably or inadvertently broken one by one, Conaire's fate looms gradually closer and ever more inevitable. One of them ordains that ' You must not sleep in a house from which firelight is visible outside after sunset, and in which light is visible from without.' The violation of this *ges* is implicit in l.584 ff. : ' Great was the fire that was kindled by Conaire every night, that is, a *torc caille* (lit. ' a boar of wood,' meaning ' a huge fire '). It had seven openings. When a log was pulled out of its side every spurt of flame that used to issue forth from each outlet was as big as the flame of an oak house ablaze. There were seventeen of Conaire's chariots at every door of the house, and that great light was conspicuous through the wheels of the chariots to those watching (outside). ' Tell us, O Fer Rogain,' said Ingcél, ' what is that great light yonder'.' Then there is the description of the house of Da Derga at l.281 : ' There are seven doorways into the house (said Mac Cécht), and seven cubicles between every two doorways ; but it has only one door-valve, and this is turned to each doorway from (to) which the wind blows.'[1]

[1] Similarly in ll. 1311-2.

Conaire's *ges* is not to sleep in a house from which firelight can be seen inside from without or outside from within. In the actual outcome only the first part is violated, but clearly the violation of the other part was anticipated by the wording of the *ges*. We are told that the house in which he stayed had seven doorways, but that only one of these is in fact closed. If we combine these elements relating to the house of Da Derga, we have then an outline not unlike that in the Gwales episode in *Branwen*. There one door is closed, the others open.[1] The opening of the closed door brings to an end the sojourn in the happiness of the Otherworld and renews the trials and tribulations which had long been forgotten. I suggest that this represents the Welsh author's adaptation of the passages in TBDD quoted above. In it he re-moulded the Irish usage of the *ges*. He made the one closed door hide the forbidden sight from those within, which represents a clever alteration partly necessitated by the lack of elaborate detail such as is found in TBDD to describe the whole situation, including the presence of watching enemies preparing to attack the house. Instead of the light of the fire, which would mean very little outside the context of the Irish tale, he inserted Cornwall and Aber Henfelen, for the change obviously invested his narrative with a more immediate attraction for his readers.

It must be readily admitted that the passage in *Branwen* differs considerably in its detail from the relevant passages in TBDD, but the point is this : Could the author of the Welsh tale have used this material in such a dissimilar setting without altering it ? Moreover, in view of the fact that he seems to have known TBDD and borrowed other material from it, is it at all possible that he created the episode in question, giving it such a basic similarity to the content of the Irish passages and yet without reference to them ? That would indeed be coincidence.

[1] It matters little that there are three doors in *Branwen* and seven in TBDD. The number of doors seems to depend largely on the whim of the story-teller, and in fact the number is once given as nine in TBDD (l.1088). Besides, three and seven are favourite numbers.

It may be noted that the word *drws* in the Welsh text means ' door-way ' as well as ' door ' and that this meaning would bring the passage closer to that in TBDD.

(b) *Bendigeidfran carrying the musicians* :

When Bendigeidfran waded across the sea to Ireland, he carried ' all that there was of string minstrelsy on his own back ' (*ac a oed a gerd arwest ar y geuyn e hun*), which phrase presumably referred to the musicians themselves together with their instruments. This is one of the passages in *Branwen* which characterize Bendigeidfran as possessing gigantic stature ; but it is well to remember that, in the case of the other passages, there is reason to doubt whether his hugeness is original in Welsh tradition or whether it results from certain borrowings attached to his name by the author of *Branwen.* For instance, the Irish build a hall large enough to accommodate him, knowing that he has never been contained in a house before ; but, as we saw earlier, Irish literature represented the great houses of tradition, and especially that at Tara, as being of huge extent, and there is a distinct possibility that Bendigeidfran was proportioned to fit the Irish hall, rather than the other way about. Again, we have seen that the description of his massive features is undoubtedly borrowed from the Irish TBDD, where it refers to Mac Cécht, the champion of Conaire Mór. But the reference to him carrying the musicians on his back to Ireland occurs in the text immediately before the passage containing the adaptation of the description of Mac Cécht. For that reason I think we are justified in comparing another passage occurring towards the end of TBDD : Conaire is assailed by a terrible thirst and Mac Cécht leaves the *bruiden* to search for water for him. As he goes forth, he takes Conaire's son Lé Fer Flaith with him, under his armpit, together with Conaire's golden cup, in which an ox and a salted pig might be boiled; he carries also his shield and his two spears and his sword together with the iron bar of the royal cauldron (and the references to these accoutrements in other parts of the tale stress how enormous they are).[1]

It will be seen that there is an essential similarity between this passage and the one in *Branwen* ; a gigantic figure

[1] Ed. Thurneysen § 148 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales,* p. 123.

bearing a great burden consisting of a number of separate objects. The difference in the terms of the two accounts is, of course, considerable : in one the giant carries instruments of war and a prince, in the other he carries instruments of music and the musicians.[1] But here again it is necessary to judge a possible borrowing in its true perspective. Supposing for the moment that the Welsh writer had been attracted by the picture of the huge Mac Cécht leaving the *bruiden* of Da Derga and travelling throughout Ireland under his enormous burden, how do we suppose he might have made use of it in his own narrative ? Let us remember that Bendigeidfran has to cross to Ireland, and that the story-teller has already decided to borrow the description of Mac Cécht's huge features, a passage which by its own nature must be incorporated in the account of Bendigeidfran's journey across the sea. The most natural thing was to include the references to the burdened giant also in this account, and of course that is where we do find it.[2] It is true that we should never dare to connect these passages from TBDD and *Branwen*, if we had no reason to suppose that the author of the later tale was familiar with the former, but, since we have, the whole question is consequently transposed from the level of hazard to that of deduction. The author of *Branwen* must almost certainly have read the account of Mac Cécht and his burden in TBDD. Moreover, he refers to Bendigeidfran and his burden in immediate proximity to a description of him which is borrowed from a description of Mac Cécht in TBDD. The question the reader must ask himself is : Did the author of *Branwen* write the reference to Bendigeidfran carrying the musicians and instruments to Ireland without

[1] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 193. The Irish description is not the only one of its type in Irish literature ; cf. the account of Cú Chulainn, p. 48 sup.

[2] In the Irish text the giant carried part of his burden under his arm, while in the Welsh text he carries all on his back. But this change also may be explained by the new setting, for surely it would be unwise even for a giant to wade to Ireland carrying an orchestra under his arm !

any thought of Mac Cécht's exit from the *bruiden* in TBDD ?[1]

vii. *The Beheading of Bendigeidfran*

The journey of the seven men who escaped from Ireland bringing with them the head of Bendigeidfran naturally stands dependent upon the beheading incident itself: After being wounded in the foot by a poisoned spear the king of the Britons commanded the seven men who escaped from the battle to cut off his head, carry it to the White Mount (*Gwynuryn*) in London, and there to bury it with its face towards France. They would, he said, be feasting in Harddlech for seven years, with the birds of Rhiannon singing to them, and during that time the head would be as pleasant company to them as when it was united to his body. The head would also remain uncorrupted throughout the fourscore years they were to spend in Gwales. And so in fact it happened.

Now, let us for the moment assume that the journey from Ireland to London via Harddlech and Gwales did form part of the tradition of an adventure to Ireland from which seven men escaped (cf. p. 146 ff. inf.) : the question then is to what extent this journey has been altered in *Branwen* as a result of later Irish literary influences. If my evaluation of the Gwales passage be correct we have already evidence of a not inconsiderable borrowing in this episode ; and if it contains one instance of Irish influence, it may contain others. Our attention is drawn to the beheading of Bendigeidfran in particular by the fact that the Irish resuscitation theme as preserved in the Ard Lemnachta legend was very probably one of the sources drawn upon by the Welsh story-teller in the immediately preceding section of *Branwen*, and that it incorporates a beheading element.

[1] There is a similarity between the opening sentence of TBDD, *Buí rí amra airegda for Érinn, Eochaid Feidlech a ainm*, ' There was a famous and noble king over Ireland, named E.F.', and that of *Branwen, Bendigeiduran uab Llyr, a oed urenhin coronawc ar yr ynys hon, ac ardyrchawc o goron Lundein*, ' Bendigeidfran son of Llŷr was crowned king over this Island and exhalted with the crown of London '; but there is no question of one being influenced by the other, for this type of opening appears to have been traditional in Welsh as well as in Irish, and occurs elsewhere in the *Mabinogi* (Cf. Ifor Williams, ' Hen Chwedlau,' *Cymm. Soc. Trans.*, 1946-7, p. 49 ; Melville Richards, *Breuddwyd Ronabwy*, p. xiv).

It is scarcely possible, therefore, that the author of *Branwen* did not notice this element, which plays such an important part in his tale. There are two apparent possibilities : First, the account of the beheading of Bendigeidfran was already extant before the composition of *Branwen*, and the derivation of the preceding resuscitation episode from Irish tales containing a beheading element was a mere coincidence, or else was suggested by the Bendigeidfran narrative ; secondly, the beheading of Bendigeidfran is due to the author of *Branwen* and derives through him from Irish literature.

With regard to the first alternative, coincidence may be dispensed with unless there is no reasonable explanation, and the idea that the borrowing of the resuscitation from Irish was suggested by the account of Bendigeidfran's beheading is possible, but not probable. In the first place the resuscitation theme is sufficiently attractive as narrative material to justify its own inclusion, and, more important, it is employed by the story-teller to dovetail with the account of Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his Otherworld cauldron in the earlier part of the tale. This improbability of the first alternative becomes automatically the probability of the second. But there is one rather more substantial consideration in favour of the second alternative, namely that the beheading of Bendigeidfran is consequent upon his being wounded by a poisoned spear, a feature of the narrative which points to the wounding by poisoned weapons in the Irish resuscitation tales. If the author of *Branwen* borrowed this, then there is at least a reasonable *prima facie* case for arguing that he borrowed the beheading incident also.

Moreover, we are not entirely dependent on the evidence provided by the Ard Lemnachta legend, which may well have suggested the beheading of Bendigeidfran as a consequence of the resuscitation episode and the wounding with the poisonous spear, but does not account for the head's behaviour during the sojourn in Harddlech and Gwales. There are a number of early Irish texts in which severed heads have the power of speech, and in some of these instances the speaking head is associated with feasting,

which may be compared with the Otherworld feasting in *Branwen*. It is unnecessary to list these Irish texts or to treat of them at length, for they have already been described fairly fully elsewhere.[1] I shall mention only two. The first is *Cath Almaine* ('The Battle of Almain')[2] a text in which there is mention of a certain Donn Bó, a gifted musician and story-teller who was with the army of Fergal, king of Ireland. On the eve of the battle he promised to make music on the following night, but his king was defeated and slain in the conflict and he himself was beheaded. His head was later brought in to the feast of the victorious Leinstermen and he was asked to entertain them, whereupon he sang sweet music, so sad and plaintive that all the company wept. The second reference is to TBDD, and I mention it not because it is one of the most interesting instances of the severed head in Irish literature or particularly close to the Bendigeidfran incident, but simply because it occurs in a text which appears to have been familiar to the author of *Branwen*. In the passage in question Mac Cécht leaves the *bruiden* of Da Derga and travels afar in search of a drink of water for Conaire king of Ireland, but when he returns he is just in time to see the king being beheaded. He pours the water into the neck of Conaire's body, and the severed head utters verses of gratitude and praise to him.[3]

The conclusion to be derived from the evidence is that the beheading of Bendigeidfran was quite possibly suggested by an Irish resuscitation legend adapted and incorporated in the preceding passage in *Branwen*, and that the subsequent 'pleasant company' provided by the head could have been

[1] Mrs. Chadwick, *Scott. Gael. Studies*, IV, 120-5 ; G. L. Kittredge, *Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 177-80.

[2] Ed. Stokes, RC XXIV, 24 ff.

[3] Ed. Thurneysen, § 157 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 125.

influenced by the Irish associations of the severed head.[1] The evidence from Irish literature does not allow us to go further than this likelihood of borrowing ; but it is a significant fact that Arthurian scholars who have investigated the subsequent development of the Bendigeidfran story in Arthurian romance have come to the conclusion that the severed head represents an alteration in the old tradition. To use Loomis's phrase, ' the author of *Branwen* has been distracted by a strange tale of Brân's severed head.'[2] The suggestion is that the Otherworld feast originally took place in the presence of the god, but that his title of *Penn*, ' chief, head ' was at one stage taken in its physical connotation, thus giving rise to the *Branwen* version.[3] If we accept this explanation, says Miss Newstead, ' the curious story of Brân's severed head presiding at a feast becomes intelligible,' but perhaps if she had compared the

[1] All story-tellers are prone to unite different traditions or literary narratives already linked by a similar theme or central motif. In the lives of SS. Gwenfrewi and Beuno (A. W. Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 18 f., 290 ff.) it is told how the former was beheaded by a king who had sought to violate her. However, Beuno was close at hand and he promptly put the head on the body and restored it to life. Where the blood had fallen, a well sprang up which was known thenceforth as Fynnawn Wenvrewy after the saint, and whose water had the power of healing sickness and disease. This well is also the subject of a poem by Iolo Goch (*Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, ed. Lewis, Roberts and Williams, 1937, 104 f.) which contains the following lines :

Lle y llas pen Gwen—bu gwir
Fro wiw gu—Frewi gywir,
Arwydd gar bryn, hyn o hwyl,
Yw'r ffynnon oroff annwyl . . .

Yn ei berw, yno y bwrir—
Enwog waith, iawn yw a gwir—
Dynion wrth eu dadeni . . .

The poet is here recalling the miraculous cures effected by the holy spring, but it seems clear from the wording of his description that his mind was dwelling at the same time on the passage in *Branwen* telling of the revivifying cauldron and the beheading of Bendigeidfran ; corresponding to the phrases *peir dadeni, byrywyt y kalaned* and *llad y benn* he has *llas pen Gwenfrewi, bwrir* and *wrth eu dadeni*, while the word *berw* could refer to the cauldron heating on the fire just as well as to the bubbling spring.

[2] *Arthurian Tradition*, p. 387 ; cf. his *Celtic Myth.*, p. 148. In support of his opinion Loomis points out that in one of the poems attributed to Taliesin the poet states that he sang ' before the sons of Llŷr (i.e. Brân and Manawydan) at Ebyr Henvelen ' (*Cymmrodor* XXVIII, 197 ; PMLA LVI, 904 f.).

[3] Helaine Newstead, *Bran the Blessed*, pp. 19, 80.

Irish instances of the talking head, she might have felt that they also helped to make the Welsh story intelligible, or at least less unusual. However, the fact that these authorities take for granted the antiquity of the Bendigeidfran legend and do not seem to consider the possibility that the severed head derives from Irish literature, makes it all the more impressive that their conclusion and mine, independently arrived at, agree in marking out the severed head as a late addition or alteration. I suggest that the beheading is due to an Irish form of the resuscitation legend ; they, that it arose from a mis-interpretation, conscious or otherwise, of the title *Penn*. Perhaps the two suggestions are not mutually exclusive, for how are we ever to know precisely to what extent the author's choice and ordering of his materials were influenced by literary echoes and analogies.

Before leaving this subject, I might mention one minor point which has occurred to me in respect of Bendigeidfran's beheading. It has to do with the resuscitation passage. The warriors revived in the *Peir Dadeni* would be, we are told, just as good at fighting as before, except that they would not have the power of speech. I can recall no antecedent in relevant Irish texts for this lack of the faculty of speech, so that I can only assume that it is due to the story-teller himself. The only explanation I can propose is an extremely tentative one, namely that the story-teller, having his sources in mind while writing this part of *Branwen*, came to associate speech with severed heads and resuscitation with whole bodies. In the Ard Lemnachta resuscitation legend, the druid tells the Leinstermen how to revive their own dead, but advises them to behead those of their enemies, the implication being that this would prevent them being revived in like manner. A combination of a narrative of this sort and the traditions of speaking heads might give rise to an association such as I have tentatively attributed to the Welsh author.

viii. *The Burying of the Head*

Bendigeidfran ordered that his head be carried to the

White Mount (*y Gwynuryn*) in London and that it be buried there with its face towards France. So it was done in due course, ' and when it was buried, that was one of the Three Happy Concealments, and one of the Three Unhappy Disclosures when it was disclosed, for no plague (*gormes*) would ever come across the sea to this Island so long as the head was in that concealment.'[1] This passage calls to mind incidents in two Irish tales. In the first, which deals with the conversion and death of Loegaire, king of Ireland, it is said that his body ' was brought northwards from Leinster and buried with his arms in the outer rampart to the south-east of the royal *ráith* at Tara, with his face looking south towards the Leinstermen and making war on them, for during his lifetime he was an enemy to Leinster.'[2] The second citation is from the life of St. Cellach (*Caithréim Cellaig*), whose father was Eogan Bél, king of Connacht. In one of his many conflicts with the Ulstermen the king was fatally wounded, and he commanded his body to be buried on the side of the *ráith* or hill[3] with his face towards the north, for as long as his face should be to the north, the Ulstermen would never prevail in battle against Connacht. So it was fulfilled, and the Ulstermen continued to be dogged by defeat until they exhumed Eogan's body and

[1] According to the complete form of the latter triad it was Arthur in his pride who disclosed the head, for he did not wish that the Island of Britain should be protected by any power but his own (*Ped. Keinc*, ed. I. Williams, p. 224).

[2] LU, cd. Bergin and Best, ll.9816-9 : text and trans. by Plummer, RC VI, 162 ff.; Stokes, *Tripartite Life of Patrick* II, 562 ff. There is an early allusion in Tírechán's memoir on St. Patrick, which was written during the second half of the seventh century. According to this Loegaire rejected Christianity, because he wished to be buried in the pagan manner described above (*Book of Armagh*, ed. John Gwynn, pp. xlviii, 19b ; *Trip. Life*, ed. Stokes, p. 308). In the Leinster text called the *Bórama*, which I have cited earlier on several occasions, we are told that Loegaire was swallowed up by the earth because he had sworn by the elements never more to seek tribute from Leinster and had violated his oath (RC XIII, 52-3 : *Silva Gadelica* I, 369 ; II, 407). Perhaps this swallowing up by the earth is a Leinsterman's interpretation of the protective burial associated with Loegaire.

[3] The word is corrupt in the main MSS., but the editor doubtless correctly, takes it to be the gen. of *ráith*. A later version of the tale has *ar taeb na tulcha*, ' on the side of the hill.'

brought it to the north, where they buried it face downwards.[1]

There is no need to stress the similarity between the Irish passages and that in *Branwen.* The pattern is : A king is mortally wounded, and orders that he is to be buried on a hill or rath with his face towards the enemy, so that he may continue to protect his territory ; but, after a time, his remains are taken from their resting place and misfortune returns. The inevitable question is : Has there been borrowing ? As it happens, the closest correspondence is between *Branwen* and the later Irish text, *Caithréim Cellaig*, which dates from *c.* 1200 ; but the evidence suggests that there were earlier complete accounts of this sort of protective burial in Irish literature. The reader will have observed that there is one notable deviation from the basic pattern in *Branwen*, in that it is only the king's head, and not his body complete with arms, which is buried in the mound. This discrepancy confirms a part of my argument in the last section, namely that the severed head of Bendigeidfran is an innovation originating in *Branwen.* I have already sought to show that the escape of the seven men from Ireland is preceded by a whole series of borrowings or adaptations from Irish culminating in the wounding of Bendigeidfran with a poisoned spear, and that the story-teller was influenced by the Irish material he had just used, as well as by a common Irish tradition, to describe Bendigeidfran as being beheaded and to treat him as providing an example of the speaking head. Consequently, when he decided to introduce the theme of the protective burial, whatever its origin, he had to alter it and substitute the severed head for the body provided with arms.

It is possible, then, that the author of *Branwen* found the burial theme in Irish, but there is no very strong evidence in favour of regarding it as a probability. Whatever its source, the burial of Bendigeidfran's head is important for the light it throws on the working methods of our story-teller. I have pointed out before that he has adapted

[1] Ed. Mulchrone, l. 82 ff. ; O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* I, 50-1 ; II, 52 (transl.).

his borrowed material arbitrarily, altering it to comply with his own whim or with the exigencies of a foreign context. The burial theme, whether it be derived from Welsh or Irish sources, provides an excellent illustration of such re-shaping.[1]

ix. *The Death of Branwen*

> 'And then his head was struck off, and they set out for the other side, these seven, and the head with them, and Branwen the eighth. And they came to land at Aber Alaw in Talebolion. And then they sat down and rested them. Then she looked on Ireland and the Island of the Mighty, what she might see of them. 'Alas, Son of God,' said she, 'woe is me that ever I was born: two good islands have been laid waste because of me!' And she heaved a great sigh and with that broke her heart. And a four-sided grave was made for her, and she was buried there on the bank of the Alaw.'

Thus the tragic career of Branwen comes to an even more tragic end. The story-teller has done well. By his restraint and good taste he has given beauty and emotion to what might easily have been merely ludicrous. But even his art has its limits. He cannot disguise the fact that the passage quoted above has all the appearance of having been interpolated in the account of the seven survivors returning from the expedition to Ireland. To this point we shall return later in this study. For the moment let us consider the nature of the passage itself, and, in particular, the analogies one may draw with Irish literature.

[1] It has since come to my notice that there is evidence for the tradition of protective burial in Wales. In Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, § 44, it is told how Guorthemir (Gwerthefyr) the son of Guorthigirn (Gwrtheyrn) died shortly after he had expelled the followers of Hengist and Horsa from Britain. But before he died, he requested the people of his household to bury him on the edge of the sea in the harbour whence the enemy had departed, and this, he said, would prevent them for ever establishing themselves permanently in the land of Britain. However, his people despised his wish and did not bury him in the place he had ordered.

Although this does not provide the same agreement in detail with *Branwen* as do the Irish versions quoted above, it nevertheless testifies to the existence of the underlying tradition in Britain at an early date.

The heroes of early Irish literature died violently and it was fitting that their heroines should die dramatically. One would be hard pressed to list all the instances where Irish heroines die suddenly, whether through an excess of modesty or a broken heart, in the literal as well as in the figurative sense, or through dashing their brains out against a rock, in the manner of Deirdre. In fact such exits are almost a commonplace of tradition. And what is more to the point, there are instances which are quite close to that of *Branwen*.

In *Táin Bó Cuailnge* there is an episode dealing with a certain Rochad Rigderg mac Faithemain, one of the Ulstermen. He and his men came and took up position near the camp of Ailill and Medb, the king and queen of Connacht and leaders of the expedition against Ulster. When their daughter Finnabair heard this, she disclosed that Rochad was her first love. Her parents were quick to seize the opportunity thus presented. They asked her to go and seek a truce from her lover until such time as the king of Ulster himself should come to battle, and they told her to sleep with him in order to gain her point. But when the seven kings of Munster heard what she had done, each of them in turn pointed out that Finnabair had been promised to him under heavy sureties on condition that he came on this hosting with the Connachtmen. The outcome was a pitched battle among Ailill and Medb's own forces in which seven hundred men were slain. 'Finnabair heard of that,' the text goes on, 'namely the death of the seven hundred because of her. She died through shame of it. It is from that (the place called) Finnabair Slébe takes its name.'[1] This is the account as given in the first extant recension of TBC. The second recension, that which is found in LL and has been assigned tentatively by Thurneysen to within the first quarter of the twelfth century, does not differ except in detail, although it expands the episode considerably. When Finnabair heard what had happened, it tells us, 'her heart broke like a nut within her breast through shame

[1] Ed. J. Strachan and J. G. O'Keeffe, l. 2911 ff.; cf. *Heldensage*, p. 195 f.

and sorrow, and so Finnabair Slébe is the name of the place where she fell.'[1]

The same graphic expression is used to describe the death of another Finnabair, this time in the Dindshenchas.[2] Her heart broke when she heard the news that her father, Lugaid Láigde, had been slain. It was because of this, so we are told, that the plain known as Mag Finnabrach was thus named.[3] Again in the Dindshenchas we read of Achall whose heart broke (*is trúag . . . brissed cridi úair Aichle*) when she heard of her brother's death at the hands of Conall Cernach. And, of course, it was because of this sad event that the hill called Achall in the vicinity of Tara got its name.[4] From the same source comes the story of Brí Bruachbrecc whose 'heart broke within her' (*cori bris a cride inti*) when she was prevented from meeting her lover, Liath mac Celtchair Chualann. This explains the place-name Brí Léith.[5]

One can see quite easily that these few examples cited from Irish literature are all of one type. The pattern upon which they are based is traditional in the sense that native story-tellers regarded it as an accepted mode of consummating a tragic narrative or of merely providing a mechanical explanation of a place-name. We have no evidence that the same was true of Welsh literary tradition, although it must be admitted that, in view of the lack of material in Welsh, we cannot automatically conclude the opposite.[6] The similarity between the death of Branwen and that of

[1] Ed. E. Windisch, l. 4555 ff.

[2] RC XVI, 69 ff. ; cf. *Met. D.* IV, 216.

[3] In *Aided Muirchertaig maic Erca* ('The Death of Muirchertach son of Erc') the king's wife and the mistress who has brought about his death both die suddenly of grief and sorrow. The expression referred to above is used of the wife's death, except that for *cnó-maidm*, 'to break like a nut' the story-teller or scribe has written *cró-maidm*, 'a burst of blood' (ed. Stokes, XXIII, 426-8).

[4] *Met. D.* I, 46 ; in the prose version, RC XV, 289 f., the nut simile is employed once more.

[5] RC XVI, 78 f. ; cf. *Met. D.* IV, 228.

[6] The line *Vyg callon neur dorres* occurs in *Canu Llywarch Hen* (ed. Ifor Williams, p. 14), but the attendant circumstances are quite different.

Finnabair in TBC is remarkable, particularly when we take into consideration the difference between their contexts. The question which follows naturally is, Has the author of *Branwen* been influenced in his account of the heroine's death by similar accounts which he had read in Irish?, and obviously one can answer only very tentatively. On the one hand, it is quite feasible that a Welsh story-teller should, while working quite independently, choose to make his heroine die with a broken heart caused by grief and sadness and associate the event with a certain landmark ; on the other is the insidious and persistent recollection that this particular story-teller did not work independently in other parts of his tale, and also the impressive fact of the popularity which this death by what might be termed emotional seizure held throughout the centuries in Irish literature.

# V

## MISCELLANEOUS ELEMENTS IN *BRANWEN*

### i. *The Otherworld and the Birds of Rhiannon*

AFTER Branwen's death and her burial at Talebolion, the seven warriors went on to Harddlech in accordance with Bendigeidfran's instructions. On their arrival

> 'they sat them down and began to regale them with meat and drink ; and even as they began to eat and drink there came three birds and began to sing them a certain song, and of all the songs they had ever heard each one was unlovely compared with that. And far must they look to see them out over the deep, yet was it as clear to them as if they were close by them ; and at that feasting they were seven years.
>
> And at the end of the seventh year they set out for Gwales in Penfro. And there was for them there a fair royal place overlooking the sea, and a great hall it was . . . And that night they were without stint, and were joyful. And notwithstanding all the sorrows they had seen before their eyes, and notwithstanding that they had themselves suffered, there came to them no remembrance either of that or of any sorrow in the world. And there they passed the fourscore years so that they were not aware of having ever spent a time more joyous and delightful than that. It was not more irksome than when they came there, nor could any tell by his fellow that he was older[1] by that time than when they came there.'

As I mentioned earlier, this passage preserves most of the outstanding characteristics of the Celtic Otherworld. When the story-teller chooses to represent it as a great hall or palace (or a well-known place like Harddlech) he must

[1] Incorporating Gruffydd's emendation, *yn* [*hyn yn*] *hynny o amser.*

of course forego the opportunity of describing the

> Beauty of a wondrous land,
> Whose aspects are lovely,
> Whose view is fair and excellent

but he can still, as in *Branwen*, set the atmosphere by sensitive treatment of the essential virtues of the Otherworld. The abundance of food and drink as in Harddlech and Gwales occurs consistently in the accounts of the blissful realm. The supernatural lapse of time, through which centuries become as years and years as days, is also found frequently. While Bran and his companions were in the Land of Women, they were subject to this illusory notion of time : ' It seemed to them that they were there a year—it happened to be many years.' And when they approached the coast of Ireland after their adventures and addressed themselves to a gathering of men they saw there, they found that these knew nothing of Bran mac Febail except what they had learned from their ancient lore.[1] This is one of the earliest Celtic instances of a motif which is too common to warrant further comment on its presence in *Branwen*.

More interesting are the three birds, referred to by Bendigeidfran as *adar Rhiannon* (' the birds of Rhiannon '). As an element of the Otherworld scene melodious song birds are by no means confined to the Celtic tradition, but in that tradition, especially as it is attested in Irish literature, they appear to have been possessed of a special attraction for the poet and story-teller. In *Immram Brain* one quatrain tells of an ancient tree in blossom on which birds sang out the Hours, and the idea of birds associating themselves with divine services is one which recurs in later texts.[2] It

[1] Ed. Van Hamel, *Immrama*, p. 18 ; Meyer, *Voyage of Bran* (with transl.), I, 31-3.

[2] In *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* (' The Voyage of Snédgus and Mac Riagla ') the travellers come to an island on which there is a tree with beautiful birds singing psalms and canticles of praise, and one of which, a bird with head of gold and wings of silver, preaches of creation and the life of Christ and the last judgement (ed. Stokes, with transl., RC IX, 20 ; Van Hamel, *Immrama*, pp. 83 f., 88). The text of *Fís Adamnáin* (' The Vision of Adamnán ') describes three stately birds perched on the throne of the lord singing the canonical hours (C. S. Boswell, *An Irish Precursor of Dante*, p. 32 ff.; Windisch, IT I, 175).

has been suggested that the imagery of the birds calling the hours was due in the first instance (that is, presumably, in the text of *Immram Brain*) to the influence of the Latin poem *De Ave Phoenice* attributed to Lactantius,[1] but, while that may well have been the case, it does not follow that birds were introduced into the Irish version of the Otherworld from descriptions in Christian Latin literature. The complex of magic and mythological associations already attaching to birds symbolizing the Otherworld in early Irish literature seems too complex to permit any such inference, and, after all, it is scarcely surprising if the not so distant ancestors of the poet who wrote of the blackbird

> He whistles in the willow tree,
> Descanting from his yellow bill,
> Gold-beaked, black-coated, that is he,
> Stout ousel and his trembling trill.[2]

had included the beauty of singing birds in their conception of the blissful ' Land of the Living.'

It is perhaps better to regard *Immram Brain* as constituting in this respect, as in others, a union of Christian and native traditional elements. In any case the bird motif persists as one of the familiar marks of the supernatural realm, whether it be the pagan Otherworld or the Land of Promise of the Christianized version. In association with the former it is found, for example, in *Serglige Con Culaind* (' The Sick-Bed of Cú Chulainn ')[3] and *Echtra Taidg meic Chéin* (' The Adventure of Tadg son of Cian ')[4] ; with the latter in *Immram Ua Corra* (' The Voyage of the Uí Corra ')[5]

[1] Cf. J. Carney, *Studies in Ir. Lit. and Hist.* p. 283 f. ; also see Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 238 ff.

[2] Robin Flower's rendering of the verse in IT III, 47.

[3] Ed. Dillon, ll. 494-7 ; transl. Dillon, *Scott. Gael. Studies* VII, 64 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 189.

[4] Ed. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* I, 352-4 ; II, 394-6 (transl.).

[5] Ed. Van Hamel, *Immrama*, pp. 98, 103 ; Stokes, RC XIV, 32 f., 44 f.

and the story of St. Brendan's voyage.[1] In several texts the birds are three in number as in *Branwen*, notably in *Fís Adamnáin* (see p. 103 n. 2 sup.) and in *Echtra Taidg meic Chéin*. Of course, this agreement between the Irish and Welsh instances might merely imply that the Celts were given to triplication, which we know already; but the parallel does not end there, at least as between *Branwen* and the *Echtra*.

In the relevant section of Tadg's adventure, he encountered a gathering of lovely women led by Clíodna the daughter of Genann mac Tríuin of the Tuatha Dé Danann (the people of the *síd* or Otherworld). While he spoke to her he saw three beautiful birds approaching and perching on an apple-tree that stood close by, one of them blue with a purple head, the second purple with a green head and the third speckled with his head of the colour of gold. They sang so sweetly and melodiously that the sick would sleep to it. Clíodna said that they would accompany Tadg and his company on the rest of their journey, giving guidance and providing music until again they reached Ireland. When the men took their leave, after what they imagined was an hour but was really a year, they set out over the sea in their boat and the birds commenced their song so that the sadness of the parting was changed to joy and merriment. When they looked back towards the land which they had just left, they could no longer see it, for between them and it a magic mist had been drawn.

The *Echtra* is a late text, belonging to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, but its author had consciously made use of earlier tales dealing with the journey to the Otherworld. My abbreviated version of the passage in question thus gives us an idea of the sort of associations the author of *Branwen* may have had in mind when he referred to the

[1] e.g. Plummer, *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, I, 57; II, 56 (transl.). I have not sought to make anything like a complete list of instances of the magic singing birds in Irish literature. In Welsh we may note in *The Lady of the Fountain*, RM 168; *Ac ar hynny y daw kawat o adar, a disgynnu ar y pren a·wnant. Ac ny chlyweist eiryoet yth wlat dy hun kerd kystal ac a ganant*, 'And thereupon a flight of birds shall come to alight on the tree, and never have you heard in your own country a song so delightful as that they shall sing.'

Birds of Rhiannon. Clíodna is the queen of the Otherworld who possesses the three magic birds, and in this she corresponds to Rhiannon or, in the earlier form of her name, **Rīgantona*, the 'Great Queen.'[1] As I observed earlier, one does not rightly know how much importance to attach to the number of the birds. It recurs in another comparatively late tale, *Caithréim Conghail Chláiringnigh* ('The Martial Career of Conghal Cláiringneach'), where Bé Iúda, daughter of the king of Norway, demands as her bride-piece 'the three birds of the daughter of Cairtheann Corr—and the men and women of the earth would sleep, though they were in dire distress, through the effect of the music of those birds.'[2] As it happens, their owner, whose name is given as Saighead, turns out to be a hideous hag; but this need not surprise us, for anyone acquainted with Irish literature knows how persistent and deeply traditional is the dual role of the goddess as, on the one hand, the fairest of queens and, on the other, the most ugly and repellent of hags.[3] As the heroes watch this monstrous figure approach, they see that she has three wondrous birds, one on her right shoulder, one on her left shoulder and one on her breast. These are the magic birds they seek.[4]

These references to the magic birds recall the tale of Cú Roí mac Dáire's death, which I have referred to earlier (p. 47 f.). In the course of the expedition on which he accompanied the Ulster men against the Fir Fálgae, they carried off, as well as Bláthíne (Bláthnat), the three cows of Iuchna, a cauldron, and three little birds that used to sit on the cows' ears. While they sang, the cows would fill the

[1] On the mythological background to this name, see Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*, p. 98 ff.

[2] Ed. P. M. Mac Sweeney, p. 110. Gerard Murphy points out that the theme of this passage is common in folk-tales (*Ossianic Lore and Romantic Tales of Med. Ireland*, p. 45).

[3] Cf. O'Rahilly, *Ériu* XIV, 7 ff.; Breatnach, *Studies*, 1953, p. 321 ff.; Mac Cana, *Ét. Celt.* VII, 76 ff.

[4] op. cit., p. 134.

huge vessel with milk.[1] Though we know little about them, their number and their magic song, and, of course, their Otherworld origin, suggest a possible connection with the birds of Rhiannon and their Irish parallels. In the texts they are referred to as *firu(-a) Ochaine* (in the acc. case), which seems to mean ' the men of Ochain.[2] Whether this implies that we have here one of the numerous instances of people from the *síd* or Otherworld being transformed to the shape of birds, one can only conjecture.[3] What we can assume with reasonable assurance is that Rhiannon and her birds represent a conception of the queen of the Otherworld which was shared in Ireland. The very fact that the birds are assigned to Rhiannon within the story of Branwen is evidence for the comparative antiquity of the association. Moreover, one of the *anoetheu* that Ysbyddaden Bencawr demanded from Culhwch in return for consent to marry his daughter was, ' The Birds of Rhiannon, they that wake the dead and lull the living to sleep,'[4] thus showing that they were possessed of pre-existing traditions which a story-teller might expect to invoke by a mere allusion. Here they are introduced into *Culhwch ac Olwen* in much the same manner as the birds of Saighead into *Caithréim Conghail Chláiringnigh :* unfortunately, unlike the Irish tale, *Culhwch* does not reveal to us how the hero succeeded in accomplishing his difficult task.

[1] See *Ériu* II, 20, also p. 5 ; ZCP IX, 211 ; also Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 435,-9,-41.

[2] Vernam Hull believes that the name contains the pl. of *fír*, " which as a noun meant ' truth,' then ' proof,' then ' *Wahrheitsbeweis*." Because in one of the texts *firu Ochaine* is glossed by *láimdei beca tuctha anall imaille frisin n-ingin*, ' little hand-gods [images] which were brought from yonder with the maiden ' (*Ériu* II, 6), he infers that it was talismanic images that Cú Roi carried off (*Journal of Eng. and Germ. Phil.* XLII, 159, n.37). I should rather be inclined to see in this explanation the attempt of some glossator to rationalize what seemed to him a peculiar phrase.

[3] To take but two of the early instances, cf. *Aislinge Óenguso* ('The Vision of Óengus ') : ' They (Óengus and Caer) went from there in the shape of two white birds until they reached the *Brug* (a fairy habitation) of Mac ind Óo, and they made harmonious music so that the people fell asleep for three days and three nights' (ed. Shaw, p. 63), and *Serglige Con Culaind*, in which the two fairy women come first in the form of birds and sing a little measure of song so that all the gathering fall asleep (ed. Dillon, l. 59 ff. ; transl. *Scott. Gael. Studies* VII, 49 ; *Anc. Ir. Tales*, p. 178).

[4] *Adar Rhianhon y rei a duhun y marw ac a huna y byw*, WM 241 b.

So far we have been observing individually the basic elements that go to make up the picture of the Otherworld in *Branwen*. But their main interest in this particular case lies in the manner in which the writer has adapted them to his own particular purpose. We have seen that the seven men, on their return from Ireland, came first to Harddlech and then to Gwales, thus assigning to the Otherworld two different locations. There is nothing unusual in that, for Irish tales of the *echtra* ('adventure') and particularly of the *immram* ('voyage') type frequently make the travellers journey from one place of wonder to another. What is uncommon is to find the Otherworld located in a spot so well-known as was Harddlech to the mediaeval Welsh. As far as I am aware, there is no evidence that it had any such associations in Welsh tradition, while on the other hand, the indications are that Gwales had.[1] Moreover, it is noticeable that the Otherworld characteristics attributed to Harddlech and Gwales in turn are mainly complementary. To take but one example, not a word is said in respect of the former which might indicate where exactly the travellers sat down to feast, but it is to be presumed that it was in a hall such as is described in the Gwales passage. In fact, one would achieve in many ways a more satisfactory account of the Otherworld habitation by combining the main elements in the two episodes.

A possible inference from these facts is that the account of the seven years in Harddlech is, as such, untraditional, and that the author has divided an earlier description of the Otherworld into two independent episodes. It may be asked why should he have done so, assuming the inference to be well-founded. A possible answer is that he was making use of a tale or tradition according to which Brân and Manawydan and others sojourned in the Otherworld, there localized off the coast of southern Wales (see p. 145 infra), and that he had to unite this with his account of the return of the seven survivors from Ireland (see p. 146 infra). This journey had to be by way of Anglesey, because, amongst

[1] Cf. Loomis, *Wales and the Arth. Leg.*, p. 149 f.

other possible reasons, Branwen's burial there had to be included in the narrative. Consequently the travellers had to proceed along the coast from North Wales to Gwales in the south before they could continue their journey to London. Possibly our author felt that this roundabout way of reaching Gwales from Ireland did not receive sufficient justification from this first outline of the tale, for there was no obvious reason why *Branwen* should not have died and been buried somewhere more convenient to Gwales, if the place of her death had simply to be on a route from Ireland to the island off the south Welsh coast and had not depended upon various other considerations. This little difficulty in the work of synthesis he resolved to a considerable extent by adding the visit to Harddlech to the itinerary they were obliged to follow in accordance with Bendigeidfran's instructions.

ii. *Inundation of the Land between Wales and Ireland*

> 'Bendigeidfran and the host of which we spoke sailed towards Ireland, and in those days the deep water was not wide. He went by wading. There were but two rivers, the Lli and the Archan were they called, but thereafter the deep water grew wider when the deep overflowed the kingdoms.'
>
> *Bendigeiduran, a'r yniuer a dywedyssam ni, a hwylyssant parth ac Iwerdon, ac nyt oed uawr y weilgi yna, y ueis yd aeth ef. Nyt oed namyn dwy auon, Lli ac Archan y gelwit. A guedy hynny yd amlawys y weilgi, pan oreskynwys y weilgi y tyrnassoed.*

There is a certain amount of ambiguity in the first sentence of this passage. Does it mean that Bendigeidfran swam across the deepest part of the sea with his followers and then waded the remainder of the way, or does it mean that he waded the whole way, as is assumed in the above translation? The answer depends largely on whethe we place the comma before or after *yna* in the Welsh text.[1] But this is not the limit of our uncertainty with regard to

[1] See on this point I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 192 f. If the two rivers mentioned in the following sentence are to be taken as identical with the original narrow extent of water, then this supports the second interpretation.

the passage. It has been suggested by W. J. Gruffydd[1] and Thomas Jones[2] that the sentence *A guedy hynny . . . tyrnassoed* is a gloss (and by the latter that it is in fact two glosses joined together).

In the article in question Professor Jones draws attention to a Latin triad which had been copied into page 522 of MS. Exeter Cathedral Library 3514. This alludes to three kingdoms that had been destroyed by the sea. The first was the kingdom of Teithi Hen, which lay between Menevia (i.e. St. David's) and Ireland. From its destruction none survived save Teithi Hen with his horse, and he was infirm throughout the remainder of his days as a result of his terror. The second was the rich, level and fruitful kingdom of Helig fab Glannawg, which was ' between Ceredigiawn and Ynys Enlli, and [extended] as far as Menevia.' and the third was the kingdom of Rhedfoe fab Rheged. According to Professor Jones this is a Latin translation of a Welsh triad, the implication being that the gloss added to the text of *Branwen* is similar in nature to the considerable number of triadic allusions throughout the *Four Branches*, and that the glossator knew of tales about kingdoms situated between Wales and Ireland which had been inundated by the sea.

What connection there may have been between any of these tales and the allusion in *Branwen* on the one hand and the well-known story of Maes Gwyddneu (Cantre'r Gwaelod) on the other is not clear.[3] The latter is the subject of a poem in BBC, which is regarded as the remnant of a complete tale and may well be earlier than *Branwen.* It is also alluded to in the twelfth century *Bonedd y Saint*, as is the inundation of the land of Helig fab Glannawg.[4] In any case it is clear that it was the inundation

[1] *Cymm. Soc. Trans.*, 1912-3, p. 62.

[2] BBCS XII, 79 f.

[3] Gruffydd assumes that *Seithenhin*, the name of the principal figure in the Maes Gwyddneu tale, is a corrupt derivative of *Teithi Hen* (*Math*, p. 147, n. 61), but this is regarded as a doubtful identification by Thomas Jones.

[4] *Vitae SS. Brit. et Genealogiae*, ed. A. W. Wade-Evans, p. 322. For a discussion of the traditions of these two lands overwhelmed by the sea, read the article by Rachel Bromwich, *The Early Cultures of N.-W. Europe*, p. 217 ff. ; also the more recent *Sunken Cities* by F. J. North.

tales associated with some or all of the kingdoms already mentioned which suggested the insertion of the gloss. But even if we excerpt the sentence *A guedy . . . tyrnassoed* as a gloss, the remainder of the passage still suggests awareness of traditions according to which the sea between Wales and Ireland was once much more shallow and narrow than in the writer's time, although the allusion was apparently not sufficiently pointed for the later glossator. The reference to the two rivers, it is true, looks like an odd fragment of tradition filched from some unknown source and interpolated in the narrative. If these rivers are to be taken as identical with the narrow extent of (deep) water separating Wales and Ireland, then the statement is inconsistent with its wider context in *Branwen*, which represents the coastline more or less in the same position as today. Very probably, therefore, we should regard this also as a later addition to the original narrative.

iii. *Caswallawn fab Beli.*

According to the introductory passage at the beginning of the Second Branch, the mother of Branwen, Bendigeidfran and Manawydan was Penarddun daughter of Beli.[1] This would make Caswallawn their uncle, although later in this text he is given as a cousin of Brân and in the early section of the Third Branch as a cousin of Manawydan.[2] When the seven survivors returned from Ireland, they found that the seven men who had been left as overlords in charge of the Island of the Mighty were dead, and that Caswallawn was now its ruler and crowned king in London. He had slain six of them himself, and the seventh, Cradawg son of Brân, whom he would have spared because he was his cousin's son, broke his heart with consternation at seeing the sword slaying his men while he could not perceive who wielded it ; for Caswallawn wore a magic mantle (*llen hut*) so that only his deadly sword was visible. When we turn

[1] On Beli Mawr see Rachel Bromwich, *Studies in Early British History*, p. 131, n. 2.

[2] Sir John Rhys resolved this inconsistency by assuming that Penarddun was originally the sister of Beli, and that the first reference in *Branwen* is erroneous (*The Welsh People*, p. 39).

to *Manawydan fab Llŷr* we find him thus established in power. Pryderi, who has given his mother Rhiannon in marriage to Manawydan, goes to Oxford to render him homage and is received with great joy because of his gesture of fealty. Later, after their land has been laid waste and Pryderi and Manawydan are engaged during their wanderings in supporting themselves by the exercise of various crafts, there is another allusion to Caswallawn. The two are so skilful at making shields, that the local craftsmen are dismayed by their competition and determine to slay them. Pryderi proposes to resist, but Manawydan dissuades him from such a reckless course, for, said he, 'Caswallawn would hear of that, and his men, and we should come to grief. We will go to another town.'

The Caswallawn of the passages just cited derives from that Cassivellaunus whom Latin historians have placed on record as distinguishing himself by his opposition to Caesar's invasion of Britain, and who is exhalted still more in Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of the same events.[1] Apparently the account of this historical campaign gave rise to tales about Caswallawn of which, unfortunately, only a few traces remain. Sir Ifor Williams has drawn from the Triads evidence of two such tales, or, more probably, episodes within a tale, the first telling how Caswallawn went as far as Rome to seek Fflur who is named by several poets as an exemplar of female beauty, the second how Caswallawn contracted a fateful bargain with Caesar through which the latter got a foothold on British soil in return for the horse called Meinlas. The two are linked by an allusion in a poem attributed to both Cynddelw (12th cent.) and Llywarch, Prydydd y Moch (early 13th cent.). This refers to Caesar's having sought Fflur from the ruler of Britain, that is, presumlaby, Caswallawn.[2] The latter is named in still another triad which speaks of him pursuing Caesar's forces from the island of Britain.[3]

[1] Caesar, *De Bello Gall.*, V, 11, 18-22 : Dio Cassius, XL, 1-3 : *Hist. Reg. Brit.*, III, 20 ; IV, 1-11.

[2] 'Hen Chwedlau,' *Cymm. Soc. Trans.*, 1946-7, pp. 41-3.

[3] Triads from Peniarth MS. 16, ed. Rachel Bromwich, BBCS XII, 14, § 35.

Finally the kingship of Britain is associated with Beli and his sons in *Breuddwyd Maxen*[1] and *Cyfranc Lludd a Llevelys*.[2] The general implication of these references, when taken in conjunction with those occurring in the Second and Third Branches of the *Mabinogi*, is that part of the tale or tales which they presuppose was already in existence when Geoffrey composed his history.[3]

In his *Rhiannon* W. J. Gruffydd sought to outline Caswallawn's character and role in the tradition implied by the references in the Second and Third Branches : The brief passage of *Manawydan* telling how Pryderi first intended going to Kent but waited and later went to Oxford to pay homage to Caswallawn is in fact 'a vital nucleus of a primitive legend of the malevolent wizard Caswallon, surviving into the time when the mabinogi was composed' (pp. 68, 72). It seems to be based upon a version of the *Waste Land* different to that which forms the central theme of the Second Branch. 'The reason for the inclusion of this doublet in *Manawydan* is at first sight obscure, since, as it stands, it has no bearing on the rest of the mabinogi. It provides however an additional example of . . . the inclusion of more than two versions of the same story, one of which is so manipulated as to become subordinate to the other. Caswallon son of Beli is, of course, a main character in Geoffrey's *Brut*, and what is said of him here in *Manawydan* agrees with the tradition there recorded. In *Branwen* however we get a different Caswallon ; there he is definitely a *gormes*, a tyrannous persecutor . . . Here (still in *Branwen*) Caswallon is one of the company of evil magic-workers who figure so largely in the *Four Branches*, and it seems that in the basic tales from which both *Manawydan* and *Branwen* were constructed, Caswallon was represented as the Other-world enemy of the protagonists. For some reason, not easily discernible, the evil-working magician of tradition has been given the name of a historical character,

[1] Ed. I. Williams (1920), p. 1.

[2] Ed. I. Williams (1922), p. 8.

[3] Cf. Rachel Bromwich, loc. cit., pp. 110, n. 2 ; 131-3.

Cassivellaunus, whom Geoffrey of Monmouth had made famous and who was associated with Eastern England' (p. 75 f.). In his role of 'evil magician' Caswallawn has taken the place of the more famous magician Manawydan, and Manawydan becomes the victim. Consequently the latter has now lost his bad character as the *gormes* (p. 88). 'The evil magician in *Pwyll* was Gwawl vab Clud, so he, working through another and better-known magician, Liath mac Celtchair whose name had survived in Dyved from the Irish period, supplants Caswallon whose activities are relegated to a mere explanatory paragraph unconnected with the main events. In time Liath mac Celtchair's name is given a typical Dyved connexion by calling him 'Llwyd vab Cilcoed' (p. 89).

Such is Gruffydd's method of analysis and synthesis that one hesitates to reject outright whatever conclusions he may have arrived at in any particular instance. Often his instinct leads him where the evidence will not, and not rarely his instinct seems to be right. This is true even on occasions where he has misconstrued important details of the evidence on which the conclusion should normally rest. It therefore behoves us to be wary in our criticism of his interpretation of the evidence relating to Caswallawn, but we are not in consequence relieved of our obligation to point out certain apparent weaknesses in that interpretation.

The basis of his argument is the alleged difference between the Caswallawn of *Branwen* and the Caswallawn of *Manawydan* and Geoffrey of Monmouth, the former being the tyrannous persecutor and evil magician. Frankly, I fail to see this difference. In *Branwen* Caswallawn slew six of the seven men left to guard Britain and thereby won the kingship. The seventh, whom he wished to spare, died in spite of him. There is no indication of the *Waste Land*. Now, no one is likely to suggest that, against the background of early tradition, the mere act of killing opponents in a struggle for the kingship implies the type of role or character put forward by Gruffydd. It is true that Caswallawn wore a magic mantle which rendered him invisible,

but in itself this means simply that he was gifted with the supernatural power of rendering himself invisible, and does not necessarily imply that his power was evil. It is a common motif and on a number of occasions in Irish literature it comes to be associated with saints as well as with visitors from the Otherworld. Moreover, if *Manawydan* preserves the nucleus of the ' primitive legend,' surely it is there rather than in *Branwen* that we should expect to find traces of the malevolent character which is attributed to Caswallawn.

Gruffydd's theories have presented him with problems of order and chronology which he does not appear to have resolved. Manawydan, he says, was the bad character (but see p. 126 f. infra) until he was replaced in that role by Caswallawn, who was in turn displaced by Liath mac Celtchair, who in due course became Welshified as Llwyd vab Cilcoed. But how is one to reconcile this with his implication on p. 76 that the name Cassivellaunus was assigned to the ' evil-working magician ' after it had been made famous by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Even if we were to cede to the opinion expressed years ago by Gruffydd and accept, against the opinion more recently held by himself and other scholars, that *Branwen* was written as late as 1150, it would still not reconcile his statements. I can only suggest in respect of Gruffydd's whole argument that the superstructure of theory is much too substantial and imposing for its flimsy foundation of evidence.

But if we reject Gruffydd's reconstruction, we must try to get something in its place, of necessity an interpretation which will be more prosaic and less imaginative than his. Let us appraise the evidence coldly and factually. In *Manawydan* there are three brief references to Caswallawn in his capacity as king of Britain ; in *Branwen* only the passage describing how he won the kingship in Bendigeidfran's absence and containing a little admixture of the marvellous such as would be welcome to any medieval reader.

We have seen that there were probably early traditions of Caswallawn as ruler of Britain. On the other hand there is no evidence outside *Branwen* that such traditions existed

in connection with Bendigeidfran (Brân). Perhaps it was the author of *Branwen* who exhalted him to his position as king of Britain and possessor of the crown of London.[1] Sir John Rhys long ago took note of the Latinity of the phrase *ardyrchawc o goron Lundein*,[2] and, of course, if it is derived from a Latin text, it is more likely to have referred to Caswallawn than to Bendigeidfran. If it was the story-teller who connected Bendigeidfran with the kingship of Britain for the first time, we may presume that he sought to associate him with a character who was known traditionally as possessor of that dignity. This he could have achieved by making Caswallawn's reign subsequent to that of Bendigeidfran and dependent upon the circumstance of the latter's absence (and death) in Ireland.

With regard to the *Four Branches* as a whole, the consensus of opinion is that they are to be assigned to the one ' author.' Whatever be the validity of this view, it is at least clear that some one person must have arranged the series more or less in its present form. It follows that it was he who worded the opening passage of *Manawydan* so as to form a link between it and the final situation in *Branwen*, and consequently it was in all probability he who introduced the references to Caswallawn with the object of preserving the *status quo* reached at the end of the preceding Branch.

### iv. *The Breechless Irishmen*

We are told that when Efnisien crept in among the dead bodies of the Irish, two ' bare-breeched ' Irishmen came to him and cast him into the revivifying cauldron. Sir Ifor Williams pointed out that the adjective *bonllwm* in the text did not mean ' unshod ' or *aux pieds nus*, as previous translators had rendered it, but rather ' breechless.' This may seem a peculiar way of describing Irish warriors, but fortunately the author of *Branwen* is not alone in doing so.

[1] When Bendigeidfran heard of his sister's tribulation in Ireland, he summoned the full levy of the 154 districts of the island of Britain. Ifor Williams draws attention to the fact that according to one reckoning there were 156 commots in Wales, and suggests that the story-teller may have transformed the commots of Wales into the districts of Britain (*Ped. Keinc*, p. 19).

[2] *The Welsh People*, p. 39, n.1. This is doubtful ; see *Geir. Prifysgol Cymru* for exx. of *ardderchog* followed by prep. *o*.

The nakedness of the Irish in peace and war is a common topic in writings of foreigners belonging to the twelfth and later centuries, included among them Geoffrey of Monmouth and Giraldus Cambrensis, but it is in Layamon that we find a reference in similar terms to that in *Branwen.* Uther had invaded Ireland to carry off the great stones for the construction of Stonehenge, and the Irish then pursued the Britons to Wales. Their king led them into battle, and they took hold of their weapons 'and off with their breeches' (*and of mid here brèches*). Professor Tatlock, to whose work I am indebted for this reference,[1] has collected a number of others to confirm its historical accuracy. It is one of the points he brings forward to prove Layamon's 'close knowledge of Ireland,' and perhaps we may do likewise by the author of *Branwen.* If we accept the end of the eleventh century as the approximate date of the Welsh text, or more than one hundred years earlier than Layamon's poem, then the reference is certainly independent of Layamon and the rest of the twelfth century writers.[2] At such an early date, the description of Irish warriors as being breechless during battle is much more likely to derive from personal knowledge than during the, comparatively speaking, history-ridden twelfth century, but it would be dangerous to base any assumptions on allusions of this sort.

v. *The Author's Knowledge of Irish Geography.*

As a hostile Bendigeidfran was approaching Ireland, counsel was taken by the Irishmen and it was decided to retreat across the river Llinon and to break down the bridge across it; since there were loadstones at the bottom of the river, neither ship nor vessel could go upon it. This counsel was followed. Then Bendigeidfran landed with his fleet and came to the bank of the river. It was seen that there was no bridge over this unnavigable water, but the king of the Island of the Mighty solved the predicament by laying

[1] *The Legendary History of Britain,* pp. 515-7; 'Irish Costume in Lawman,' *Studies in Philology* XXVIII, 587-61.

[2] It is just possible that the agreement of *Branwen* and Layamon on the subject of Irish battledress, or lack of it, has some bearing on the question as to whether or not Layamon drew upon Welsh texts or traditions.

his enormous body across it, whereupon hurdles (*clwydeu*) were placed upon him and the hosts passed over him.

There are two words in the above passage of special relevance to the subject of this study, namely *Llinon* and *clwydeu*. The first represents the Gaelic form of the river Shannon, with Welsh *ll* for the unfamiliar palatal *s* of Gaelic, and, because of the sound substitution, Sir Ifor Williams concludes that the name was borrowed from spoken, not written, Irish.[1] With regard to the second I feel that W. J. Gruffydd is completely justified in seeing it as a 'hidden reference' to the Gaelic name of Dublin, *Áth Cliath*, 'the ford of the hurdles,' but when he proceeds to explain the significance of this reference, I must dissent: '... but the name of Dublin, which the hurdles were meant to explain, is not mentioned. This suggests also that the early version of this part of *Branwen* was in Irish.[2] This is a rather startling deduction, and is presumably due to Gruffydd's obsession by the idea of Gaelic literature and tradition flourishing in the western areas of Wales till a late date. In reality, the explanation of the onomastic reference is probability quite simple. The meaning of the name *Áth Cliath* would be obvious to a man who borrowed from Irish literature as the author of *Branwen* did, even if we ignore the possibility that he knew of a relevant onomastic tale such as inevitably accompanies prominent Irish place-names.[3] He saw that he might make use of it in another connection, and did so, as any good story-teller might. He did not refer to Dublin itself simply because, through the perversity of his story-teller's nature, he did not choose to do so.

There remains, however, a more substantial difficulty in this passage. The Irish, we are told, retreated across the Llinon (Shannon) so as to leave the river between themselves and the Britons. Then 'Bendigeidfran came to land and a fleet with him, towards the bank of the river'

[1] *Ped. Keinc*, p. 195 f.

[2] *Rhiannon*, p. 8.

[3] For such explanations of the name Áth Cliath, see *Met. D.*, ed. Gwynn III. 100 ff.; RC XV, 328 f.; (Áth Cliath Medraige) *Met. D.* III, 314 ff.

(*Bendigeidvran a doeth y'r tir, a llynghes y gyt ac ef, parth a glann yr avon*), whereupon it was pointed out to him that the river was impassable because of the loadstones and the lack of a bridge. In a note on the phrase *parth a glann yr avon*, Sir Ifor Williams regards it as demonstrating how ill-informed the writer was on the score of Irish geography, but I must confess that I cannot see it in this light, for, even assuming that Ireland was *terra incognita* to the writer, would he as a good story-teller and a writer of lucid prose, ever conceivably have set down such a baffling sentence? It is, in all common sense, impossible to bring ships to land on the bank of a river and then find that the river is impassable for any vessel. In fact the only situation in which ships could come to the bank of the river would be where the river flowed out into the sea, in which case the difficulty of crossing it would be completely irrelevant. As it stands, it is the story-teller's narrative that is deficient, not his geography; and yet, considering that one of his characteristic virtues as a story-teller is the clarity of his writing, I should hesitate to charge him with such a blatant and elementary blunder. One solution is to amend the text by inserting a verb meaning 'to advance, proceed' or such like before *parth a.* The reading would then be something like this : *Bendigeidvran a doeth y'r tir, a llynghes y gyt ac ef,* [*a dyvot a wnaeth ef*] *parth a glann yr avon.* Solutions by emendation are naturally suspect, but many are correct and each must be judged on its merits. In this case, if we assume the omission of a verb, we find clarity where there was confusion ; we need no longer tax the story-teller with being entirely ignorant of Irish geography (a charge difficult to sustain in any case), and we are dispensed from accepting an obvious element of redundancy in the Welsh sentence (*y'r tir; parth a glann yr avon*). It is unfortunate, therefore, that the first of the fragments in MS. Peniarth 6 commences a mere couple of lines later in the text.

Finally, one or two additional observations on the story-teller's knowledge of Irish geography. It is reasonable to assume that the Irish were in the vicinity of Dublin when they saw Bendigeidfran approaching on his journey from

north-west Wales. Their retreat, if carried out directly towards the west, would bring them to the Shannon somewhere on the section of the river between Loch Ree and Loch Derg. This is consistent with the testimony of early Irish documents that there were two roads crossing this stretch of the Shannon from the direction of Dublin, one at Athlone and the other at Clonmacnois.[1] One may, of course, attribute this historical and geographical accuracy to mere chance, but I prefer to regard it as an indication that the passage in *Branwen* was written by a man who knew his Ireland. The lack of such detail as we might expect from him is probably due to the fact that he is writing for a Welsh audience and that he is seeking to project his story into the distant past and treat of Ireland as an unknown territory, worthy of Bendigeidfran in his great adventure.

I shall now quote, for the sake of comparison, from an account of the Williamite war in Ireland in 1691 as given by Stephen Gwynn in his *History of Ireland* :

'In the early summer, when Ginkel's campaign began, the line of the Shannon was intact, and his first effort was directed against Athlone[2] . . . Then without difficulty he captured the English town at Athlone, on the Westmeath bank. But the defenders crossed the bridge and blew it up behind them ; and St. Ruth moved up his army to within two miles of the Irish town. Ginkel, he said, would deserve to be hanged for attempting to cross, and he himself should deserve to be hanged if Ginkel succeeded. Yet Ginkel crossed.

The fault was not with the Irish soldiers . . . At one moment the attackers succeeded in throwing a temporary bridge of planks across the broken arches ; but a party of eleven went out to cut away this woodwork under the fire of an army and worked till the last man was killed ; then eleven more took on the task and completed it . . . Other attempts were repulsed, and St. Ruth in his camp was complacent, but left the trenches to be manned by two raw

[1] Cf. Colm Ó Lochlainn, in his article on ' Roadways in Ancient Ireland,' *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill*, p. 471 ; also map at back.

[2] This is on the stretch of the Shannon mentioned above.

regiments provided with only two rounds a man. Ginkel learned this, tried the assault again, and succeeded . . .'[1]

The parallel between this historical event and the narrative in *Branwen* is such that the latter might almost be a romanticized version of the former, were it not for the disparity in date. It helps to confirm my view that the Welsh writer knew his Irish geography. He was aware that any army would find it almost impossible to fight its way across the Shannon if the bridge were cut down ; but that would be mere prosaic fact, and he was writing a romantic tale ; hence the loadstones.

[1] op. cit. p. 348.

# VI

## MANAWYDAN: BENDIGEIDFRAN: THE SUB-TITLES

HAVING disposed of most of the secondary or less integral elements in *Branwen*, it is now time for us to turn to the investigation of what remains. Assuming that there was a basic version of the tale which was remoulded and expanded until it reached its present form, it is here that we might expect to find it. But even in this residue there is obviously a lack of unity which indicates the conflation of narrative materials, and, since the family of Llŷr appears to be the key to the problem, we shall co-ordinate a survey of the information relating to it with our investigation of the tale.

Gruffydd though it ' more than probable that the Llŷr family is a latecomer from Ireland into British pedigrees', but it is not quite clear how he meant this to be interpreted in point of detail. The fact is that early Irish literature knows of no such family ;[1] consequently it may be more convenient and profitable for us to deal with them individually rather than as a family unit.

### MANAWYDAN

It is evident that the Irish Manannán (or, as commonly in early Irish orthography, *Manandan*) and Manawydan do not correspond perfectly as cognate forms. That explains partially why Gruffydd proposed the explanation that the Welsh form had been borrowed from an Irish written source and falsely transliterated.[2] Some scholars have preferred to regard the traditions of Manannán and Man-

[1] There is an Irish text called *Oidheadh Cloinne Lir*, ' The Fate of the Family of Lir,' which tells how the four children of Lir, three boys and a girl, were changed into swans by their jealous stepmother and laid under a spell to spend nine hundred years on lake and sea. But the tale is late and there is no discernible connection between its main characters and the Welsh family of Llŷr. Cf. Dillon, *Early Irish Lit.*, pp. 53, 62-7.

[2] *Rhiannon*, p. 81

awydan as deriving independently from a common Celtic tradition, but recently Vendryes has adduced certain considerations which tend to support Gruffydd's theory of direct borrowing from Irish.[1] He points out quite rightly that there is no real evidence for the existence of a god Ler, of whom Manannán was the son, but that the designation *mac Lir* was originally descriptive, meaning 'son of the sea,' which would be a most natural and appropriate way of qualifying the name of one generally associated with the sea in Irish literature. It was at a comparatively late stage in Irish tradition that Ler was understood as the name of Manannán's father (and even then it remained nothing more than a name),[2] whereas in Welsh tradition the expression *mab Llŷr* seems to have been always interpreted as 'son of Llŷr,' and Llŷr himself has developed as an independent figure and an important ancestor. This leads Vendryes to suggest that Manawydan has been borrowed from Irish, and he sees a possible confirmation of his suggestion in the epithet *lledieith* sometimes applied to Manawydan's name in Welsh : it would indicate that he spoke another language, namely Gaelic. But he goes on to point out that this throws light on the manner in which the Welsh treated such legends as they borrowed from their neighbours across the Irish sea : Ireland knows only Manannán, the traveller of the ocean and a lord of the Otherworld, either on land or, as more frequently, across the sea ; but Wales has Llŷr and his children, Manawydan, Brân and Branwen, who play such a prominent part in the *Mabinogi*. Thus, while one may speak of Manawydan in his fundamental character as having been borrowed from Irish, there is no question of a similar derivation for the body of legend pertaining to his name in Welsh. Once borrowed, the tradition of Manawydan developed independently and gave rise to a new complex of stories, unconnected with the Manannán tales in Ireland.

Of course, not everyone will be ready to accept the

[1] 'Manannán mac Lir,' *Ét. C.* VI, 239 ff.

[2] I cannot in fact recall any instance of the old nom. *Ler*. Where the name is found independently, the gen. *Lir* is used for the nom.

argument of the Irish origin of the name Manawydan. In fact, A. O. H. Jarman has expressed his scepticism in the course of a review of Gruffydd's *Rhiannon* in *Llên Cymru*, III, 123 ff. Apart from the instance in question, Gruffydd proposes a number of examples of names derived by erroneous copying, such as *Mynweir a Mynord* from *Gweir a Modron*, *Greid mab Eri* from *Priteri*, and *Glini* from *Glevi*, and Jarman rightly points out that these, taken as a whole, presuppose a long manuscript tradition, because several of the forms can be explained only through a series of errors implying a still more numerous series of manuscripts. On the other hand I feel that the examples should not be considered as a whole. Thus, while it is true that the derivation of *Mynweir a Mynord* from *Gweir a Modron* presupposes a series of copying errors extending over a considerable period of time, it does not follow that the same is true of *Manawydan*, as is implied by Jarman. An Irish form *Manand*(*-an* could become *Manauid*(*-an*)[1] through a single slip in transcription.

Jarman goes on to quote Gruffydd's opinion that, in view of the fewness of the manuscript copies of the *Mabinogi* and the dearth of references to it in the poetry of the *cywyddau* period (' Tudur Aled, for instance, in his eight score poems, has only two meagre references to the *Mabinogion*, both to *Branwen*, and four to a more primitive version, but his poetry abounds in comparisons from the Arthurian and later romances ') we are forced to conclude ' (1) that Welshmen of the medieval period knew only of the recited traditional cyvarwyddyd ; (2) that the primitive cyvarwyddyd *as such* had never been reduced to writing, since there is no vestige of any manuscript containing such work.' This, he suggests with reason, is not consistent with Gruffydd's explanation of forms like *Mynord* and *Manawydan* as due to manuscript errors. Whether it proves anything more than his lack of consistency, I am not quite sure, for

[1] Without the diminutive suffix we find *Monand* in *Immram Brain*, *Immrama*, ed. Van Hamel, p. 16, and several instances in Welsh e.g. *Manauid* beside *Manawidan*, in BBC 94, ll. 10, 11. We might compare *Catvan* and *Catvannan*, CA ll. 38, 1397.

his conclusions do not appear to follow inevitably upon his premises, at least as he has stated them. But let us confine ourselves here to his assumption that the primitive *cyfarwyddyd* had never been reduced to writing. When we consider that so little of the Welsh literature pertaining to the earlier period has survived, there seems to be little justification for concluding from the lack of evidence to the contrary that the source material of the *Four Branches* had never been set down in writing. If we examine the corresponding period in the history of Irish literature, we find that, to all intents and purposes, the whole of the secular prose literature in the vernacular is preserved in manuscripts of the twelfth or later centuries, but, because most of these texts are merely copies or mechanical conflations of earlier manuscripts versions and because the scribes sometimes refer by name to well-known manuscripts, we can form a fairly reliable index to the transmission of the literature by manuscript. For instance, there are several Irish tales, including *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, whose textual composition can best be explained by the theory that they were written down at a very early date, then developed for a long time independently in oral tradition, giving rise to more than one version, and finally came to be redacted in a form compounded of these oral versions. The earlier written forms of these tales do not exist, and can be deduced only because of the extremely conservative methods adopted by the Irish redactors of the extant versions. If we keep these points in mind and remember how comparatively little of early Welsh literature has been preserved, and that even this is largely composed of consciously literary tales where the author's aim was to obscure the heterogeneous nature of his material, then we will realize that the fact that there is no vestige of any manuscript of the primitive *cyfarwyddyd* of the *Four Branches* by no means proves that such did not at one time exist.

Thus, when Jarman points out that Sir Ifor Williams cannot trace the written prototype of the White Book text any further than *c.* 1060, he is not necessarily weakening Gruffydd's case. In fact, the manuscript history of the

extant text is largely irrelevant to the question of whether the traditional *cyfarwyddyd* was ever written down. Moreover, when we discuss the possibility of early manuscript transmission in this way, we are taking for granted that the name Manawydan, if borrowed from Irish, was originally taken into some form of the *Mabinogi*, but there is nothing to justify such an assumption, for it is in fact quite possible that the tales of the *Mabinogi* did not yet exist in anything even remotely resembling their extant form. For the one thing of which we can be reasonably certain is that the borrowing, if it took place at all, took place at a very early date. Thus the instances of *Manawyd*(*-an*) cited from BBC and the Book of Taliesin by Jarman do not necessarily contradict Gruffydd's theory, while the occurrence of *vreithel vanawyt* in the *Gododdin*[1] is an extremely doubtful piece of evidence.

To sum up with regard to Mr. Jarman's comments, which, I should point out, are only incidental to a penetrating review of the book in question, I feel that his criticisms of Gruffydd's argument are perfectly valid, but that this argument is not the best or most consistent that Gruffydd might have made in support of an Irish borrowing. In one point in particular he appears to have weakened his own case unnecessarily, namely when he says of Manannán, 'In Irish legend he is always the magician and shape-shifter *par excellence*, the Otherworld trickster who harries the heroes and heroines, the ruthless King of Faery, who entices men and women to their destruction,' and then contrasts him with the Welsh Manawydan, who is a 'good character.' Such a sinister view of Manannán is scarcely justified by the part he plays in early Irish literature, where he is on the whole given a not unpleasant character. For instance in *Immram Brain* he delights in displaying to Bran the beauties of his marine kingdom ; in *Serglige Con Culaind* he is as much sinned against as sinning ; and in *Echtra Cormaic*, even though he takes away Cormac's wife and son and daughter in exchange for a magic branch, he returns

[1] *Canu Aneirin*, ed. I. Williams, p. 2, l. 35.

them to the king when the latter goes in search of them to the Otherworld and informs him that his reason for bringing him there in the first place was that he might see the Land of Promise. Shape-shifting and the enticement of mortals to the Otherworld are commonplace in Irish literature and are in themselves not at all indicative of an evil or ruthless character.[1] I imagine that Gruffydd has been misled here by some scattered remarks of Sir John Rhys which the latter never intended to bear such a burden of theory in relation to the early history of the *Mabinogi*. It is little wonder that his attempt to explain the supposed discrepancy between Irish and Welsh tradition with regard to Manannán constitutes the most confused and hesitant section of his work.

It will be seen then that Gruffydd's attempt to prove *Manawydan* to be of Irish origin is inconclusive, but not necessarily incorrect in its intention. Perhaps the best thing to do here is to re-state the problem in different terms: In Irish literature Manannán was associated with the Isle of Man, Ir. *Mana* (*Manu*), gen. *Manann*, and we are told that it was from him it was named.[2] The Irish form *Mana* and the Welsh *Manaw* might both derive from **Manāvā*, the change over to the *n*-stem in Irish being due, if O'Rahilly's suggestion be correct, to analogy with the *n*-stem *Albu*.[3] This would mean that the name Manannán was formed after *Mana* had changed its declension, and that it and the Welsh *Manawydan* could scarcely be regarded as parallel diminutives going back to a common mythological tradition. If Welsh did not borrow from Irish, then the Irish diminutive formation might conceivably have been borrowed from it.

[1] In several later tales Manannán plays the trick of appearing in an unpleasant or hideous form and afterwards revealing himself as a divine being (see R. Flower, *Cat. Ir. MSS. in Brit. Mus.* II, 340). In one instance found in a lay of about the fifteenth century he requests the Fiana to do something which causes them injury, but this element of vindictiveness is normal in a similiar type of tale which was common in the Early Mod. Ir. period (see G. Murphy, *Duanaire Finn* II, 240 ff. ; III, 142).

[2] Cf. *Sanas Cormaic* (' Cormac's Glossary ') s.v. *Manandán* ; also Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 62, 516 f. He is sometimes connected with Scotland also ; cf. Vendryes, *Ét. C.* VI, 240 f.

[3] EIHM, p. 31, n. 5. This suggestion is apparently accepted by Jackson, *Lang. and Hist. in E. Britain*, p. 376.

One difficulty in the Welsh form is the final syllable in *Manawyd*. Sir Ifor Williams draws attention to the fact that in the Third Branch Manawydan is associated with shoemaking and is called 'one of the Three Gold Shoemakers' (*y gelwit ef yn tryded eurgryd*), and this he would explain as having been suggested by the similarity between *Manawyd* and the common noun *manawyd*, *mynawyd*, 'awl,' the name of the shoemaker's characteristic implement.[1] Now, the latter word ended in *-ŵyd*, and *Manawyd* may be presumed to have done likewise, this being in fact confirmed by a rhyming instance in the *Gododdin*;[2] but, if it was connected with the place-name *Manaw*, as seems very likely, we should then expect *Manawŷd*. The problem is presented neatly in the line just cited from the Gododdin, where the phrase *ar vreithel vanaŵyt* apparently refers to the territory near the head of the Firth of Forth called *Manaw Gododdin*, which, it has been suggested, was so named to avoid confusion with the other Manaw (The Isle of Man). Gruffydd's postulated *Manauid* resulting from an error in transcription from *Manand* would do much to resolve this difficulty, for, as a purely written form, its pronunciation might be unstable and susceptible to analogy. It would also explain the termination *-yd*, which seems to be paralleled only in the abstract termination found in *iechyd*, and is difficult to account for in *Manawyd*.

On the other hand one might use the Gododdin reference as evidence that *Manawyd*(*-an*) really took his name from Manaw in south-east Scotland and was really British in origin. In that case, however, his association with the sea and his name *mac Lir* (*mab Llŷr*) would be secondary, for they are more likely to have developed in connection with a character from the Isle of Man than with one from eastern Scotland. If they are secondary, then they are more likely to be of Irish origin, and, besides, it is not any easier

[1] BBCS III, 49; cf. *Ped. Keinc*, p. 236.

[2] *Canu Aneirin*, ed. I. Williams l. 35; also p. 76.

to derive *Manand(-án)* from *Manawyd(-an)* than to do the reverse.[1]

When we try to sum up the evidence, we find that it falls short of being conclusive ; but taken as a whole, it seems to indicate, first, that one of the two names, Manannán mac Lir and Manawydan fab Llŷr, has been derived from or influenced by the other, and, secondly, that it is the Welsh form which is derivative. This general trend in the evidence receives some confirmation from Vendrye's observation of the development of *mac lir* to *mac Lir* in Irish.

## Bendigeidfran : Brân

The main source of the history of Brân is the tale of *Branwen*, which is supplemented by a number of scattered allusions elsewhere in Welsh literature. Because *Branwen* is thus so extremely important for the study and interpretation of Brân, it is only proper that we should subject its testimony to a critical scrutiny, lest we create from it a personage who is mythical in more senses than one. In her *Bran the Blessed*[2] Miss Newstead lists a number of facts concerning Brân which are to be inferred directly from

[1] In the early text *Immram Brain* the forms *Monand* and *Monindán* also occur, which may imply that the name had not been introduced recently to the language (One of the names assigned to the Happy Otherworld in *Immram Brain* is *Mag Mon*, ' The Plain of M.,' which one is tempted to connect with Caesar's name for the Isle of Man, *Mona*, where the *o* must have been short to give W. *Môn*). The name of the Isle of Man, **Manāvā* (*Manāviā*), appears to be related to that of the Manapii, located by Ptolemy in the south-east of Ireland and regarded as a variant of that of the Menapii, the well-known Gaulish tribe ; cf. Pliny's name for the Isle of Man, *Monapia*. O'Rahilly points out that this last name is found under a Goidelic form as *Moncha*, the name of a lady in Irish tradition who is ' probably a euhemerized goddess,' and he follows Mac Neill in taking the people known in Irish documents as *Monaig* (*Manaig*) to be the representatives of Ptolemy's *Monapia*. He also regards the character known as Forgall Monach as a ' euhemerization of the ancestor-deity (**Monapos*) of the Monaig' (EIHM, p. 30 ff). It is interesting to observe that this Forgall is spoken of in *Tochmarc Emire* as nephew to Tethra, and that there is evidence that the latter was a god of the sea who had been displaced by Manannán (cf. Sjoestedt, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes*, p. 62). For instance, in this same text it is explained that *Tethra's* plain is the sea and the cattle of that plain the fish of the sea (Ed. Van Hamel, *Compert Con Culainn etc.*, pp. 26, 35 ; cf. Thurneysen, *Heldensage* p. 384 f.), which metaphor recalls vividly Manannán's description of his kingdom in *Immram Brain*. Whether the allusion in *Tochmarc Emire* implies that *Manandán* was not the only derivative of its root with marine associations is a matter for conjecture.

[2] op, cit., p. 18 ff.

the material in *Branwen*, and it may be helpful to examine these briefly :

(i) 'Brân is connected with the sea. He is the son of Llŷr (Irish Ler), a word meaning the sea. He is the brother of Manawydan, who is the Welsh counterpart of the Irish sea-God Manannán mac Lir. He wades across the Irish sea, bearing some of his followers upon his back, and later bridges an impassable river with his body. He is, therefore, like Manannán, most probably a god of the sea.' If Miss Newstead is correct in connecting Brân with the sea, as she may well be, I suggest that it is not because of the evidence in *Branwen*. Brân can wade across the sea and act as a bridge, not because he is the god of the sea, but because the story-teller envisages him as a giant and wishes to impress the reader with his size. His connection with the sea is shown rather by his relationship to Manannán mac Lir through Manawydan and by the lines in the Black Book of Carmarthen, as noted by Miss Newstead, which refer to him as *mab y werit*, 'son of the ocean' (assuming that this is not merely a poetic allusion by one who knew the meaning of the name *Llŷr* : *Lir*).[1]

(ii) 'Brân is gigantic. No house or ship can contain him. He therefore feasts under tents and wades across the sea. He is so colossal that to the swineherds of Matholwch he seems to be a mountain.' It may well be that Brân was a gigantic figure in Welsh tradition, but *Branwen* alone does not prove it. As I have noted earlier, the swineherd's description appears to be borrowed straight from TBDD and the statement that he could not be contained in a house may be based on the tradition of the 'great hall' also taken from Irish literature.

(iii) 'He possesses a magic cauldron which has the property of reviving the dead.' The revivifying power of the cauldron is probably no earlier than the composition of *Branwen*.

(iv) 'He is wounded in the foot in battle.' This may be authentic tradition (cf. p. 162 ff. infra).

[1] BBC, ed. J. G. Evans, p. 99. 14.

(v) 'He is famous for his joyous feasts', etc. This is so, and is tantamount to saying that he was represented as lord of the Otherworld.

(vi) 'If Brân is the Noble Head, it follows that he is also a wanderer, for the *Mabinogi* tells us that his companions in their extended travels were accompanied by the Head.' But it is by no means certain, or likely, that we can restore even approximately an earlier stage of the relevant section of *Branwen* simply by inserting Brân in the place of his severed head. The sojourns at Harddlech and Gwales both represent the traditional account of the visit to the Otherworld and we cannot be at all sure that they existed separately within the one tale before the author of *Branwen* set to work—indeed, as the reader may recall, the impression formed above from an independent examination of the relevant passage was that the duplication of the Otherworld scene resulted from the author's attempt to give an appearance of consistency to his narrative. Neither can we be sure that the account of Brân's feast had previously been joined to the story of the Irish expedition and the escape of the seven warriors. One thing is reasonably clear, however; that the last leg of the journey, that is to London, was added together with the burial of the head.

This will, I hope, suffice to show how unsure a guide is *Branwen* to the true nature of Brân in Welsh tradition and serve to stress the desirability of preserving a clear distinction between him and Bendigeidfran.[1] Its testimony can be accepted only when it receives some confirmation from earlier or independent texts. What we can say with assurance of Brân amounts to this: He is shown in Welsh literature as lord of the happy Otherworld and its feasting. He may have been associated with the sea, but, if so—and it must be admitted that the evidence is extremely tenuous—it is rather by virtue of his relationship with Manannán. We have seen that there is a strong possibility that the latter was the source of Manawydan, and, if that were the case, it would not be surprising if some of his basic character-

[1] Its lack of discrimination in this respect lessens the value of A. H. Krappe's article 'Bendigeit Vran' (*Ét. C.* III, 27 ff.).

istics had been transferred to Brân through Manawydan. In this regard it is worth keeping in mind the closeness of the traditional bond between the sons of Llŷr. They are introduced together in *Branwen*, and, although by the nature of the narrative the latter's role is a very minor one, they remain together throughout the whole course of the tale. According to one of the Taliesin poems the poet sang before the sons of Llŷr at Ebyr Henfelen, which implies that they presided jointly over the Otherworld feasting.[1] This opens the way to speculation as to whether Brân and Manawydan are really the two sides of the one coin, or, in other words, whether they have been developed separately, but not independently, by generations of Welsh story-tellers from the original character of Manannán mac Lir.

Actually the idea has been put forward by Gruffydd[2] and Vendryes[3] that the name Brân also has been borrowed from Irish ; but, even if this be accepted, the fact remains that early Irish tradition has only one figure whose legends could have given rise to the characters of Brân and Manawydan, and that is Manannán. In fact the only difference (assuming that the two names were borrowed together) would be that the Irish traditions of Manannán would have been shared between the Welsh characters from the beginning. The actual evidence for the Irish origin of the name Brân as suggested by the above authorities is slight. They point to an item in the prose Dinnshenchas where there is mention of a Bron mac Alloit, brother of Manannán mac Alloit (this being a variant, perhaps the original, parentage of Manannán Mac Lir[4]), who gave his name to Mag mBroin (' The Plain of B.').[5] Assuming that the form of the place-name as found there were correct, then *Broin* might be the genitive of *Bron* or *Bran*, and since the

[1] *Book of Taliesin*, ed. J. G. Evans, p. 33, ll. 3-4.

[2] *Encycl. Brit.*, 11th. ed., s.v. *Bran*, and elsewhere.

[3] *Ét. C.* VI, 250, - 3.

[4] Cf. Vendryes, loc. cit., p. 240 f.

[5] Rennes prose Dinnshenchas, ed. Stokes RC XVI, 142 f.

person responsible for this piece of topographical information restored the former as the nominative, it would suggest that he knew nothing of a Bran who was brother to Manannán, otherwise he would have written the correct form of the name. In any case, if we turn to the *Metrical Dinnshenchas* we will find that the name is there Bród, with a long vowel (*Bróin: fóir*).[1] Indeed, if we were to entertain the idea that the name was borrowed from Irish, I should prefer to regard the text of *Immram Brain* ('The Voyage of Bran') as the source.[2] It is true that there is a very considerable difference between the roles played by the hero of the Irish tale and the Welsh Brân. The latter has more or less the same function as Manannán, whereas Bran mac Febail is a mortal who, like many other mortals in Irish literature, undertakes a voyage to the Otherworld, in the course of which he encounters Manannán mac Lir and hears from him a description of the wondrous and beautiful Mag Mell (the 'Pleasant Plain'), a prophecy of the coming of Christ, and so on.[3] Nevertheless, one cannot completely ignore the fact that Bran and Manannán are so closely associated in a tale in which the latter is depicted as lord of the ocean. Moreover, if Manawydan did in fact grow out of the character of Manannán and his legend, we are really looking for the source of Brân's name and nothing else, in which case it is fruitless to contrast the Welsh lord of the Otherworld with the Irish mortal who only visits it. Most, if not all, of the Irish tales concerning the Otherworld were redacted by literary minded clerics who doubtless preserved many of the old native traditions intact, but on other occasions worked them up into new artistic creations to suit their own taste and the taste of their contemporaries. *Immram Brain* is a case in point. Some cleric blessed with a sensitive and creative mind took up the traditional theme

[1] ed. Gwynn, III, 424.

[2] Ed. Van Hamel, *Immrama*, p. 1 ff.; with transl., Meyer and Nutt, *Voyage of Bran* I, 2 ff.

[3] This divergence is very rightly stressed by Miss Newstead, op. cit., p. 26, but scholars still continue from time to time to identify unthinkingly the Irish and Welsh namesakes.

of the Otherworld journey and composed around it a beautiful poem which in its content is really an amalgam of Christian and pagan elements. Now, if the literary situation in Wales in succeedings centuries was even remotely similar to that of Ireland, and if there was—as is almost certain—some exchange of literature between the two countries, there is surely no reason why some man of learning, whether cleric or layman, should not have read *Immram Brain* and had the idea of joining the two main characters, Bran and Manannán (Manawydan), in a Welsh tale of the Otherworld, where they would figure as brothers rather than associates. After all, if Manawydan has been borrowed from Irish, then someone at some stage must have chosen deliberately and arbitrarily to represent Brân, whatever his origin, as Manawydan's brother. Also, we have seen that the latter name must have been borrowed, if at all, from a written form of *Manannán.* But *Immram Brain* was almost certainly written before the end of the seventh century and before that time there was comparatively little writing of non-didactic literature in Ireland, so that there is on the whole not much likelihood that Manannán was borrowed from any earlier text. It would then follow as a distinct possibility that Manannán and Bran were borrowed into Welsh at the same time by some enterprising story-teller whose imagination was spurred by the well known story of Bran's voyage and meeting with Manannán.

I put this forward as the most likely explanation, if we once accept an Irish origin for Brân. It must be admitted, however, that the evidence for an Irish origin is in itself not very extensive or substantial. Thus, Miss Newstead chooses to ignore the possibility, and instead assumes that Brân is an old Celtic deity whose name is preserved in a number of river-names, as becomes a 'water-deity.'[1] She quotes W. J. Watson to the effect that *Bran* occurs several times as a river-name in Wales.[2] Against Miss Newstead's

[1] *Bran the Blessed*, p. 23 f.

[2] According to R. J. Thomas it is extremely common, especially in the south, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru*, p. 181. He also notes the compound names *Brandu* and *Gwenfran.*

assumption it may be argued, first that a god of the sea is not a river god, and secondly, that the river names are at least as likely to be connected with the common noun *brân*, 'raven, crow.' She also calls attention to *Branodunum*, the name of a fourth-century fort in Norfolk, as another trace of 'the Celtic Brân,' comparing it to Lugudunum and Camulodunum, and suggests that Caer Brane near Penzance in Cornwall may be a similar relic. This is a possibility, but one swallow does not make a Summer, nor do a couple of possible ravens make a Celtic god. For Ireland Hogan cites two instances of *Ráith Brain*, one of *Dún mBrain* and one of *Dún Féich* (*bran*, *fiach* = raven). Whether *Bran* and *Fiach* represent here the personal names or the common nouns, there is no reason to suppose that the place-names in which they are found allude to deities—except in so far as many of the birds and animals occurring in place-names must have been used originally because of their mythological, e.g. totemistic, associations.[1] Animal and bird names are not uncommon in place-names, including those compounded with *Ráith* and *Dún*. We can only conclude that, while Miss Newstead may well be correct in regarding Brân as a Celtic deity, there is little real evidence to support her view; certainly it is a little hazardous to assert that the river-names, together with the two place-names outside Wales, 'point to the existence of a once wide-spread cult of Brân.'

Some mention must be made here of a number of clear topographical references to the family of Llŷr. These are distinct from the river-names etc. mentioned above in their location and in their type. They are concentrated in Denbighshire and the vicinity of the river Dee: Castell Dinas Brân[2] near Llangollen, Gorsedd Frân, Llyn Bran, Cadair Fronwen a Nant Manawyd.[3] Miss Newstead

[1] Cf. J. Lloyd-Jones, *Enwau Lleoedd Sir Gaernarfon*, p. 12 f.

[2] The old name was *Din Brein*, preserving the early genitive of *Bran*; cf. E. Anwyl, *Celtic Review* IV, 258; Lloyd, *History of Wales* I, 244, n. 87; Lloyd-Jones, *Geirfa*, *s.v. din*.

[3] Cf. E. Anwyl, loc. cit.; T. Gwynn Jones, *Aberystwyth Studies* VIII, 71 n.; Loomis, *Kastner Miscellany*, p. 342 ff.

regards these place-names as evidence for the antiquity of the traditions associated with the family of Llŷr, and with Brân in particular, and in support she quotes Gruffydd's opinion that 'the legend was the cause of the names, not the names of the legend.' This presupposes that the place-names derive, not from *Branwen*, but from traditions earlier than, or independent of, the extant text. In favour of such an assumption is the fact that the events of *Branwen*—the Gwales episode apart—are connected with the north-west of Wales—Harddlech in Ardudwy; Aberffraw, Talebolion, and Aber Alaw in Anglesey; and Caer Seint in Arvon—and, if any place-names had come into existence under the influence of *Branwen* (in view of the literary character of the tale we should not expect many)[1] one would have anticipated finding them in the same area. This suggests as a possibility that the traditions of Brân were originally connected with north-east Wales and later transplanted by some story-teller—the author of *Branwen*?—to the northwest. When, according to the tale, Brân departed for Ireland, he left seven men headed by his son Cradawg as overlords of the Island of Britain, and it continues: 'In Edeirnon were those men left; and for that reason the name Seith Marchawg was given to the township.'[2] Since this alludes to Bryn Saith Marchog situated between Ruthun and Corwen in the same territory as the places mentioned above, it would seem to represent an acknowledgement by the author of *Branwen* of Brân's association with north-east Wales. Then there is the

[1] J. Lloyd-Jones suggests tentatively that the place-name *Cwm Brân* in Caernarvon contains the name of Brân fab Llŷr. He also notes the occurrence of Llŷr in Caer Lŷr, but regards it as being probably a late formation, because it reverses the sound-change *rl* > *rll* (op. cit., p. 9).

The use of the words *Gwyddel* ('Irishman') and *Gwyddelig* ('Irish') as terms of reproach may also be mentioned here. The general semantic development can be explained without recourse to literary precedents, but in one particular phrase, *tro Gwyddelig* ('a shabby trick'), which is current in Arfon and neighbouring areas, it may possibly enshrine a forgotten allusion to the ruse of the men in the bags in *Branwen* (For the use of the expression se e Fynes-Clinton, *Welsh Vocab. of Bangor District*, p. 191; W. J. Griffith, *Storïau'r Henllys Fawr*, p. 20, the author being from Aberffraw in Anglesey; Myrddin Fardd, *Gwerin-Eiriau Sir Gaernarfon*, p. 163, where it is explained as meaning *tro brwnt a bradwrus*).

[2] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 191.

reference in the *gwarchan* in praise of Tudfwlch in the *Book of Aneirin* : *ymwan Bran* / [*clot lydan*] *yg Kynwyt*, ' the fighting of Brân of widespread fame at Cynwyd.'[1] This probably refers to the village of Cynwyd a little to the west of Corwen, and therefore must allude to an exploit of Brân's which took place within the area of his topographical associations in the vicinity of the Dee valley.[2] To all these considerations may be added the fact that medieval Welsh poetry alludes to north-east Wales as the Land of Brân (*Bro Brân*).[3]

Finally we must note the *Bran Galed o'r Gogledd* who is named in the list of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Isle of Britain* as the owner of a horn which provided one at any time with the food and drink of one's choice.[4] The earliest version of the list is no older than the fifteenth century, but several of the items are already attested by *Culhwch ac Olwen*, so that it is evidently drawn from earlier tradition. Perhaps the most interesting point is the epithet *caled*, meaning ' miserly, niggardly,'[5] attached to Brân's name. In spite of the fact that Brân Galed and Brân son of Llŷr are commonly identified,[6] it is impossible to understand this epithet as alluding to the incidents related in *Branwen*. Consequently we must suppose that there were stories associated with the name Brân which were not directly related to what *Branwen* tells us of Bendigeidfran.

All these scraps of evidence point to the one conclusion, that the traditions of Brân were concentrated in north-

[1] *Canu Aneirin*, ed. I. Williams, l. 1291, pp. 51, 356.

[2] Cf. E. Anwyl, *Celtic Review* IV, 258.

[3] E. Anwyl, *Third Intern. Congress for Hist. of Religions* II, 237.

[4] This is, of course, a virtue peculiar to Otherworld vessels. We may compare the episode in *Immram Brain* when Brân and his companions are being entertained in the Land of Women : ' The food that was brought on each dish did not diminish from them . . . no taste was lacking to them ' (*Voy. of Bran*, ed. Meyer and Nutt, I, 30 f. ; ed. Van Hamel, *Immrama*, p. 18).

[5] Cf. T. Jones, *Mod. Lang. Review* XXXV, 403 f., where he points out that Brân Galed's epithet was interpreted in this sense by the fifteenth century poet Guto'r Glyn.

[6] See particularly Loomis, *Misc. for Leon E. Kastner*, p. 347, n. 2.

east Wales.[1] We can without undue hesitation identify him with the Brân of *Branwen*, since the *Book of Aneirin* speaks of the north-eastern Brân, as does the *Book of Taliesin* of the Brân who was in Ireland and in Aber Henfelen, without epithet or qualification ; and also because Brân Galed from the North with his horn of plenty corresponds to the Brân who presided over the Otherworld feast. How the legend was transferred to the north-west is a question to which we can only hazard an answer. Is the change to be attributed to the author of *Branwen*, or did it come about through Brân's being associated with an expedition to Ireland or with the kingship, which as far as Gwynedd was concerned was seated at Aberffraw in Anglesey? We can scarecely do more than suggest possibilities on the basis of the available evidence, since there are so many factors that may have been at work and of which we know little or nothing. For example, even if we are justified in identifying the north-eastern Brân with his namesake of the north-west, this presupposes no general identity of legend, for how are we to determine precisely how much of the latter's legend attached itself to his name after he was divorced from his eastern origins. Moreover we have to reckon with literary tradition and folk tradition which may have intermingled at different times and in varying proportions. I have already discussed the two sources suggested for Brân's name, namely that it was borrowed from Ireland in conjunction with that of Manannán mac Lir, or that it was the name of a widely venerated god. We may well add a third possibility : that Brân was extracted from the place-name Din Brein (Castell Dinas Brân) and subsequently attracted traditions originally belonging to other mythological figures. This type of character-creation is, of course, of common occurrence in early literature, and Irish saga provides numerous instances. In fact, Thurneysen

[1] Loomis (*Kastner Misc.*, p. 342 ff.= *Wales and the Arth. Leg.*, p. 42 ff.) and Miss Newstead (op. cit., pp. 95-106) seek to show by reference to the medieval text *Fouke Fitz Warin* that stories of Brân and his horn of plenty were centred on Castell Dinas Brân, there called Chastiel Bran. Since the text is an early fourteeneth century prose redaction of a lost French poem composed probably between 1256 and 1264, it at least confirms that Castell Dinas Brân was already at that early date possessed of traditions or folklore.

assumes, rightly or wrongly, that the Irish Bran, hero of *Immram Brain*, was extracted from *Srub Brain* ('Raven's Beak'), the name of a promontory on the north-west coast of Ireland.[1] This merely emphasizes how many possibilities there are, and how little certainty, with regard to Brân, later Bendigeidfran. It may be suggested, however, that the possibilities are not mutually exclusive. For example, even if we suppose that Brân was originally a British mythological figure, I still find it a little difficult to accept that Manawydan was borrowed from a written source in Irish and at the same time to disregard the possibility that the association of Bran and Manannán in *Immram Brain* had some influence on the early growth of the Brân - Manawydan legends in Welsh.

Admittedly all this speculation as to the source or origin of the Welsh Brân may appear rather pointless, and I should certainly not have devoted so much space to it, were it not for the fact that it had already given rise to different theories. I considered that it might clear the air a little if I were to state briefly the case for each. Obviously one of the difficulties which bedevil a discussion of this sort is how to distinguish between the source of a name and the source of the traditions pertaining to it, for they are not necessarily the same. For the purposes of this study I feel that it is better to accept Brân without further questioning as an indigenous character possessed of certain mythological traditions and to proceed from there ; for all we can ever hope to do is to combine into one likely pattern of development the scant allusions in poetry and place-names and the relevant material in *Branwen*.[2]

[1] *Heldensage*, p. 37.

[2] There are two references to Bendigeidfran in the poems of Tudur Aled. The first (ed. T. Gwynn Jones, p. 460, l. 58) has no apparent connection with the story found in *Branwen*. The second (p. 470, ll. 41-4) alludes to the great house built specially for him in Ireland :

Bendigeidran, lle'r hanoedd,
Ni chai dŷ gan uched oedd—
Dyn a'i ben dan do ni bu
Ond tair nos yn teyrnasu.

It is true that *Branwen* makes no mention of him spending three nights, or three days, in the hall in Ireland, but the *tair nos* of the poem is probably due to metrical requirement rather than to the use of a variant of the tale.

THE SUB-TITLES

After the account of the fourscore years in Gwales the text adds :

*And because of those fourscore years it was called the Assembly of the Wondrous Head* (Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn). *The Assembly of Branwen and Matholwch* (Ysbydawt Uranwen a Matholwch) *was that wherewith they went to Ireland.*

Later we read :

*And that is what the tale* (Y kyuarwydyd) *says. That is their adventure, ' The men who set forth from Ireland.'*

Finally the tale concludes with :

*And that is how this branch of the Mabinogi ends, concerning the Blow to Branwen, which was one of the Three Unhappy Blows in this Island ; and concerning the Assembly of Brân, when the hosts of sevenscore districts and fourteen went over to Ireland to avenge the blow to Branwen ; and concerning the feasting in Harddlech seven years ; and the singing of the birds of Rhiannon, and the Assembly of the Head for fourscore years.*[1]

W. J. Gruffydd states that the author is here ' giving to different sections of *Branwen* their original designation,' and he goes on to say : ' I can only conclude from these obscure references that the material which the author was using in *Branwen* had not been assimilated into the framework of the Four Branches as completely as the rest of the material, and that immediately before *Branwen* was reduced to writing, these named portions were independent oral tales. In other words, in *Branwen* it was the author himself or his immediate predecessor who brought together its different components rather than the early cyvarwyddon. By ' components ' I mean the three or four main stories which even now retain their distinct individuality, and not the separate legends which make up the complex of each of those stories.'[2]

The only point I can agree with unreservedly here is that the author of *Branwen* (or his predecessor) was himself responsible for unifying in one narrative the various

[1] To render *ysbydawt* as ' assembly ' obviates certain difficulties in the translation of the titles in which it occurs, but see p. 143 ff. inf.

[2] *Rhiannon*, pp. 6, 9-10.

materials he chose to include. Gruffydd thinks of these ' components ' as three or four stories already extant in oral tradition and already compounded of separate legends ; but if the conclusions I arrived at from investigating the Irish borrowings are valid, then they cannot easily be reconciled with such an interpretation. Of course, in the first place it depends upon Gruffydd's view of the immediate significance of the sub-headings. To him they are the original designations of the several tales which the author had salvaged from oral tradition. Now, on the face of it this might well be true, and only the available evidence can decide. Gruffydd's immediate evidence is the lack of developed unity in the text of *Branwen* as compared with the other branches of the *Mabinogi* and the fact that the latter contain no sub-titles, apart from one brief instance at the end of *Manawydan* which seems to have referred originally to a complete *Mabinogi.*[1] (Presumably he is influenced also by the tradition of an expedition to Ireland attested by the allusion in the Taliesin poem ; cf. p. 146 ff. inf.). But this evidence is capable of a different interpretation. To judge from the rest of the *Mabinogi* it was not a common practice to insert sub-titles referring to separate episodes, especially in the interior of a tale, but if we turn to early Irish literature we find that it is, on the contrary, fairly common. In the earliest MS. of *Fled Bricrenn* (LU) the title is given rather more fully at the beginning : *Fled Bricrenn ocus in Curathmír Emna Macha ocus in Briatharchath Ban Ulad ocus Tochim Ulad do Chruachnaib Ai ocus Cennach ind Ruanada i nEmain Macha,* ' The Feast of Bricriu, and the Champion's Portion of Emain Macha, and the Ulsterwomen's War of Words, and the March of the Ulstermen to Cruachain Ai, and the Champion's Bargain in Emain Macha.' In the only MS. preserving the end of the text intact (Edinb. XL) the tale is closed by a slightly variant form of this composite title. The tale called *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (' The Tidings of Cano son of

[1] *Ac o achaws y carchar hwnnw y gelwit y kyuarwydyt hunnw* Mabinogi Mynweir a Mynord. *Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing honn yma o'r Mabinogy.*

Gartnán '),[1] which is dated by Thurneysen *c.* 900, has one title in the interior (*The Coming of Cano to Ireland and to Guaire*) and one at the end (*The Tidings of Cano son of Gartnán and of Créd daughter of Guaire*), while in *Táin Bó Cuailnge* the different episodes are denoted by separate titles.

These few instances will suffice to show how Irish story-tellers, or the scribes, employed sub-titles at the end and in the interior of their narratives. Moreover, the reader will have noticed the similiarity between the catalogue-titles which close *Branwen* and *Fled Bricrenn*, and, since we have already seen that the author of the Welsh tales was probably influenced by *Fled Bricrenn* elsewhere, it is not at all unlikely that the composite title he appended to his tale was suggested by that of the Irish text. If we accept this suggestion, then Gruffydd's inference that the several elements of the title are the original designations of those portions of the text which were 'formerly independent oral tales' is not necessarily, nor even probably, true. Instead it means that the author chose sub-titles, for the most part arbitrary, to indicate the prominent episodes in his own tale. In any case, whether or not we accept the possibility of Irish influence, the plurality of titles in *Branwen* no more means that the author was consciously designating the different oral tales he had incorporated than it does in the case of *Fled Bricrenn*. Some of them may be of this nature, but each must be judged on its own merits. For instance, how can *The Singing of the Birds of Rhiannon* refer to an oral tale, as Gruffydd implies? Is it likely to be anything more than one of the most striking characteristics of the happy Otherworld? Its inappropriateness as a title serves to emphasize the arbitrary nature of the whole list and the fact that it was drawn up with reference to the preceding tale. It might reasonably be objected at this point that I am assuming it was the author of *Branwen* who was responsible for the sub-titles, while they might just as easily have been appended later on to the true ending, *A llyna val y teruyna*

[1] Ed. Meyer, *Anecdota from Irish MSS.* I, 1 ff.; translation to German, Thurneysen, *Zeit. f. Röm. Philologie* XLIII, 388 ff.

*y geing honn o'r Mabinyogi.* But even if this were the case, my argument would remain almost unchanged apart from the omission of the word 'author' here and there, whereas Gruffydd's would be seriously weakened.

The first title in the interior of the tale, *Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn*, is difficult to evaluate. Loomis and Miss Newstead would explain it very simply as a phrase which referred originally to Brân under one of his own titles, *urdaul benn*, the Noble Head or Chief, and which was consequently misinterpreted when the word *penn* was accepted in its physical sense (cf. p. 94 sup.). This is so neat and ingenuous a solution that one is loath to reject it, but nevertheless it is scarcely sufficient to explain the story of the Head in *Branwen*. It is not credible that this tale was due simply to the author's total ignorance of the second meaning of the word *penn* or of the tradition of Brân's presiding over the Otherworld feast; therefore the author's misinterpretation of *penn* must have been to a certain degree conscious and deliberate. But is it likely that, once he had thought of this rather obvious ambiguity, he would have chosen completely independently of all other literary influences to base upon it the rather grotesque image of the severed head? On the other hand, given fitting contributory circumstances the theory of the two Arthurian scholars becomes plausible. We know that the relevant episode in *Branwen* developed from a passage in which the author seems to have made use of Irish versions of the resuscitation theme, one of which formed a close connection between beheading and revivification (cf. p. 53 sup.). We know also that traditions of 'Wondrous Heads' were by no means uncommon in Irish literature and of these our story-teller was almost certainly well aware. Once we admit these associations, it becomes easy to understand why he might have chosen to use his misinterpretation of the word *penn* as a peg on which to hang his version of the 'wondrous head' theme.

To this title is appended another referring back to the episode describing how Matholwch brought Branwen with him to Ireland. It has all the appearance of being a later interpolation and must be treated as such. Sir Ifor Williams

has pointed out the difficulty of reconciling the use of the word *ysbydawt* here with its normal attested meaning of 'feast, *hospitium, hospitalitas,*' which is evidently the meaning intended in the immediately preceding *Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn.* The explanation lies, I suggest, in the fact that the title in question was interpolated simply in order to balance the one just written in reference to Bendigeidfran and the second half of the tale with another referring to Branwen and the first half. Thus the interpolator used the keyword of the first title in the second although it was not entirely apt in its new context.

Of the final composite title we may at once discount the *Singing of the Birds of Rhiannon* as a likely designation of an independent narrative. Similarly we may with assurance regard as based directly upon the preceding narrative, first the *Feasting in Harddlech* and secondly the *Blow to Branwen.* The sentence which follows the latter making it one of a triad of 'Unhappy Blows' may be a later addition.[1] The last title, *Ysbydaut Benn,* is to be equated with the earlier *Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn,* which, as we saw, may have been originally a term used of Brân as lord of the Otherworld. However that may be, this closing title clearly refers to the preceding tale of the severed head, which is no ealier than *Branwen.* This leaves us with only one subtitle on which to pass judgement, *Yspadawt Uran* (*pan aeth yniuer pedeir decwlat a seithugeint e Iwerdon, y dial Paluawt Branwen*). It is a significant fact that this preserves the only instance of the name Brân in the whole of the Second Branch; elsewhere it has become Bendigeidfran. And since it is the simple form of the name which occurs in the Taliesin poems, we may be justified in regarding *Yspadawt Uran* as a reference to, or a reminiscence of, some earlier tale (This tale was presumably known also as *Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn*). The spelling *Yspad-* in this case as against *Ysbyd-* (*Yspyd-*) in the other three may be taken as supporting this view. In its original context the phrase probably meant something like 'the Feasting of Brân' and referred

[1] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc,* pp. xxvi, xxx.

to Brân as presiding over the Otherworld feast. But in the text of *Branwen* he had been transformed into the head which presided over the Otherworld feast, and this episode was then designated by a rather more apt title, which I have already discussed. However, if the phrase *Ysbadaw Uran* had become unnecessary and somewhat irrelevant in its original application, it could still be turned to another use. It was arbitrarily connected with the early section of *Branwen* which tells of Bendigeidfran's hosting to Ireland. Consequently, it is scarcely surprising if the use of the word *ysbydawt* (*yspadawt*) here again presents considerable difficulty to the editor and translator.[1]

In one of the poems attributed to Taliesin the poet says, 'I sang before the sons of Llŷr at Èbyr Henfelen' and later, 'I was with Brân in Ireland.'[2] The second of these claims presupposes the existence of a story dealing with an expedition of Brân's to Ireland, while the first would seem to refer to an incident or familiar situation from some earlier tale, which one cannot but connect with the titles *Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn* amd *Yspadawt Uran*, especially since the Taliesin allusion is immediately preceded by the statement that the poet sang 'in the feasting (*yspydawt*) over joyless liquor (*uch gwirawt aflawen*).' It would appear then that a variant of the situation implied by the poem is found in *Branwen*, where the seven warriors of the expedition to Ireland pass fourscore years in the pleasant company of the head, being subject to only one restraint, namely that they should not open the door facing towards Aber Henfelen. How great was the divergence between the two accounts we can only surmise on the basis of very sparse evidence. I suggested earlier that the Gwales episode incorporated an artistic adaptation of certain elements taken from the Irish TBDD, in which case the opening of the door facing towards Aber Henfelen would not have had a parallel in the earlier version. Admittedly this is one of the more

[1] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 221.

[2] *Book of Taliesin*, ed. J. G. Evans, p. 33, ll. 3, 25 ; J. Morris-Jones, *Taliesin*, *Cymmrodor* XXVIII, 197 f. The latter regards *Ebyr* as an oblique case of *Aber*, but Lloyd-Jones takes it to be the plural (*Geirfa*, s.v. *aber*).

doubtful instances of borrowing from Irish, but it receives possible confirmation from the Taliesin poem to the extent that the feasting is there situated at Aber (Ebyr) Henfelen itself. Moreover the reference to 'feasting over joyless liquor' is not easy to reconcile with the narrative in *Branwen*, for there the happiness of the seven visitors is broken only when the feasting comes to an end, and they must return to the world of mortals. On a matter of this sort it is unwise to speak with too much assurance, but the facts just noted do seem to suggest that the author of *Branwen* had made considerable use of his talents for adaptation in his handling of earlier material relating to the Otherworld feast.

It is significant that the poet's claim to have accompanied Brân to Ireland is followed immediately by the statement that he was present when Morddwyt Tyllon was slain (*Gweleis pan ladwyt ymordwyt tyllon*), which obviously refers to the same incident as the saying attributed to Morddwyd Tyllion which is inserted into the account of the fight in the great house in the Second Branch. According to Sir Ifor Williams this saying is probably quoted from a well known poem similar in type and metre to that assigned to Taliesin[1]; which means that there were at least two earlier poems containing references to Brân's expedition to Ireland.

But this is not the sum of the earlier Welsh material employed by the author of *Branwen* in this section of his tale. From the battle in Ireland only seven escaped according to his account, and he gives their names, including those of Pryderi, Manawydan and Taliesin. This mention of seven survivors is not his invention, since it already features in the poem entitled *Preiddeu Annwn*, which is attributed to Taliesin but may date from *c.* 900.[2] The poem purports to give

[1] I. Williams translates this phrase as, 'Dogs of Gwern, beware of Morddwyd Tyllion,' and relates it to the situation described in *Branwen*; but it is rather doubtful how real is the connection, for if the story-teller had had any worthwhile knowledge of the circumstances attaching to the original use of the expression he quotes, one would have expected him to introduce it in a more relevant manner.

[2] This is a tentative dating given by Sir Ifor Williams to Loomis; cf. PMLA LVI, 887=*Wales and the Arth. Leg.*, p. 131. The poem is no. XXX in the *Book of Taliesin*, ed. J. G. Evans, p. 54 l. 16 ff. A translation, of necessity tentative, is given by Loomis, loc. cit.

some account of a raid on the Otherworld carried out by Arthur and three shiploads of men, including the poet Taliesin himself. The object of the expedition was to seize the cauldron of the Chief of Annwn (*Pen Annwfyn*), which would not boil the food of a coward, and this was encompassed by a certain character named Lluch Lleawc,[1] apparently by virtue of his mighty sword. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* there is a variant of this adventure of Arthur's in which the Otherworld island has become Ireland, the cauldron belongs to Diwrnach, the steward of Odgar son of Aedd, king of Ireland, and it is finally captured after 'Llenlleawc the Irishman seized Caledfwlch and swung it in a round and slew Diwrnach the Irishman and all his host.'[2] The most striking difference between the two versions is that *Culhwch* represents the expedition as a great victory, whereas in *Preiddeu Annwn* the success of Arthur and his men in gaining their object is dimmed by the disastrous losses incurred in the attempt, as is brought out in the poem by the doleful repetition of the phrase, *Save seven none returned . . .*

In *Branwen* we have what might be regarded as a third version of this overseas or Otherworld raid. It has an expedition to Ireland, an Irish—or Otherworld—cauldron as a central element and a battle from which only seven of the Britons escaped. In addition, it supplements the account in *Preiddeu Annwn* by giving the names of the seven survivors. It is clear, therefore, that the author of *Branwen* drew upon some version of the expedition-tale found in the poem, but not the version of the poem, if we are to judge from the change in situation and the inclusion of the survivors' names. Perhaps this version drawn upon in *Branwen* is to be connected with the allusion in no. XIV of the Taliesin poems, where the poet claims to have been with Brân in Ireland, in which case it must have told of an expedition to Ireland led by Brân, from which only seven

[1] On variant forms of this name see Loomis, *Wales and Arth. Leg.*, p. 161 ff.; *Arth. Trad.*, p. 187 f. He regards them as deriving from the name of the Irish Lug.

[2] Transl. Gwynn Jones and Thomas Jones, p. 130; WM, col. 498. Cf. Rhŷs, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, p. 10; Loomis, *Arth. Trad.*, p. 187.

men returned, among them Pryderi, Manawydan and Taliesin. Whether the story-teller had at hand a complete tale about the expedition to Ireland, or whether he found the relevant details in one or more poems, it is impossible to say ; but if we accept that Brân's beheading and the subsequent burial and disclosure of the head are new, together with the Gwales episode, then this section of *Branwen* contains little that could not have been derived from allusions in poetry, except of course the passage on Caswallawn son of Beli, and this is probably to be attributed to the author.

All the material relating to the Otherworld expedition had long been studied by W. J. Gruffydd in relation to the background of the Four Branches as a whole. It is extremely unfortunate, therefore, that he only briefly indicated the trend of his conclusions with regard to it. He notes that Pryderi is mentioned only once in *Branwen*, as one of the warriors who escaped from Ireland, but nevertheless, he asserts, the extant tale ' contains, hidden under the surface, a garbled account of his traditionally great feat, namely the expedition to the Otherworld, and his snatching from Pen Annwvn, the Chief of the Otherworld, his Cauldron of Resurrection,'[1] and again, ' Pryderi spent his youth at the Court of Dyfed, and when he grew up, conducted an attack upon Annwvn, the traditional enemy of his house, of which a tantalizingly short account is given in a poem in the *Book of Taliesin*, and which originally constituted the second Branch, now called *Branwen*. He returned to the Upper-world victorious with the spoils of Annwvn, the chief of which was *Pair Pen Annwvn*, the Cauldron of the Head of Annwvn, but with only seven survivors of his army.'[2] As far as I am aware, Gruffydd

[1] He is associated with the Otherworld and with Manawydan in the Taliesin poem (no. XIV) referred to frequently in the foregoing pages :

' Perfect is my chair in Caer Siddi,
The plague of old age oppresses not him who is in it ;
Manawyt and Pryderi know it,'

(*Book of Taliesin*, ed. Evans, p. 34 ; cf. Morris-Jones, *Cymmrodor* XXVIII, p. 236).

[2] *Rhiannon*, pp. 11, 14 ; *Welsh Review* VI, 247.

never explained precisely how he arrived at this conclusion, in itself extremely feasible. We know that he regarded the Four Branches as constituting the life-story of Pryderi and in this plan the Second Branch would have told of the hero's youthful exploits, which in this case may have consisted of an expedition to the Otherworld. The hero of the expedition in *Preiddeu Annwn* is Arthur, but Gruffydd held that the tale was also told of Pryderi, as witness the fact that the poet cites as his authority the story of Pwyll and Pryderi (*ebostol Pwyll a Phryderi*), that is, the *Mabinogi*.[1]

Whatever its precise form and content, some version of the Otherworld expedition was known to the author of *Branwen*. He had it in mind when he wrote his account of Bendigeidfran's journey to Ireland and its consequences, but most of the incidents in his narrative are new, and it appears to me that he must have preserved little else but the outline of the earlier tale. Gruffydd would seem to have regarded the *Branwen* account of the journey to Ireland as resulting from long development and alteration of the basic tale of Pryderi's adventure within the framework of the Second Branch, but while I have no intention of prejudging the matter, my impression is that much of the earlier Welsh material in this part of *Branwen* might just as easily have been culled directly from sources such as the poem *Preiddeu Annwn* and subsequently worked into a new narrative. For example, in the Taliesin poem (no. XIV) already mentioned the poet states, first that he sang before the sons of Llŷr at Ebyr Henfelen and secondly that he accompanied Brân to Ireland and witnessed the slaying of Morddwyd Tyllon. The first statement refers presumably to the feast presided over by Brân (and Manawydan) and the second obviously to the expedition to Ireland, but there is no indication in the poem that the two episodes belong to the one sequence of events as they do in *Branwen*. If they had so belonged, one would have expected the poet to have mentioned them together instead of far apart and separated by unrelated allusions, as he in fact does. The

[1] Cf. *Welsh Review* VI, 247.

account of *Preiddeu Annwn* cannot be cited as indubitable evidence in this connection, but, for what it is worth, it gives the impression that the expedition and the escape of the seven warriors formed an independent story. If that is so, we must conclude that the author of *Branwen* united the tradition of Brân presiding over the Otherworld feast with the tale of the expedition to Ireland. In fact, he himself perhaps implies this by appending the arbitrary designation, *That is their adventure, the men who set forth from Ireland*, thus denoting their journey to London by way of Harddlech and Gwales as a separate episode in the narrative. With this colophon the tale of *Branwen* should have ended, but the story-teller proceeded to add the epilogue explaining the origin of the five provinces of Ireland, to which he appended the customary *And that is how this branch of the Mabinogi* ends, together with his catalogue of sub-titles.

# VII

## BRANWEN

WHEN we turn to the third member of the Llŷr family, Branwen, our problem is rather different from that posed by Brân and Manawydan, for apart from the tale to which she gave her name there are no traces in the early literature of traditions relating to her. It follows that any conclusions we may arrive at with regard to her earlier history must depend for the most part upon our analysis of the Second Branch.

It was pointed out long ago by Anwyl and Gruffydd that the stories of Branwen and of Bendigeidfran's head are quite distinct in the extant text.[1] This distinction will be obvious even to the casual reader, but, if one proceeds to investigate the text closely, one comes to realize that the division is not so definite or fundamental as implied by these two scholars. We have seen that, prior to *Branwen*, there existed traditions of an expedition to the Otherworld or to Ireland with the object of gaining possession of an Otherworld cauldron, and that this venture culminated in a fight from which only seven of the Britons survived to return home. We have seen also that there was a tradition that Brân was in Ireland, which we may take to have been merely a variant of the tradition of the expedition to Annwfyn or Ireland. In any case it is as such that Brân's sojourn in Ireland came to be part of *Branwen*. It is thus reasonable to infer that the part of the latter tale which begins with Bendigeidfran's departure for Ireland is a development of the expedition in search of the Otherworld cauldron. The severed head is an innovation, which must have been introduced by the person who incorporated so much of the Irish material in *Branwen*, and he can only have been the final redactor, or, as I prefer to call him, the author.

[1] ZCP I, 287 ; *Trans. Cymm. Soc.*, 1912-3, p. 61.

In the extant text the story of *Branwen* is merged into the expanded version of the expedition simply by replacing the original reason for the journey by a new one ; instead of going to Ireland to possess themselves of a wondrous cauldron, the Britons go to recover Branwen and avenge her ill-treatment. This—together with the fact that they did not recognise the severed head as an innovation—explains why Anwyl and Gruffydd saw the story of the head as the second section of *Branwen*.

I pointed out earlier that the treatment of the Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid episode may have been coloured by the Irish tales of Cú Roí mac Dáiri and the raid which he and Cú Chulainn carried out to recover Bláthíne (Bláthnat), the daughter of the king of Ulster,[1] and to gain possession of a Cauldron of Plenty. The similarity between this theme and the one we have in *Branwen* is obvious, and we must consider the possibility that the Welsh text has been influenced by the Irish tales, not so much because of the similarity in theme as of the fact that Branwen was at some stage deliberately substituted for an Otherworld cauldron as the motive for the raid.

In the Irish tales Bláthíne is the principal object of the raid, while the cauldron is a secondary, but important, consideration. In the original form of the Welsh tale the cauldron was the principal object. Now, supposing that the Welsh story-teller was influenced by the Cú Roí narratives, how was this likely to effect his handling of the basic theme of the expedition to Ireland (or the Otherworld)? He saw, I imagine, in the recovery of Bláthíne a means of adding variety and substance to his own version as well as providing it with a more human motivation. But in that case, it may be asked, why did he not retain the cauldron among the fruits of the raid as in his Irish sources? This is easily answered : When he introduced the Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid episode for its narrative value, he was in effect

[1] In some versions the lady's name is *Bláthnat*, formed with a different diminutive suffix, and she is daughter of the king against whom the raid is carried out ; thus the purpose of the raid is to abduct, not recover, her : see references p. 47 f. sup.

presenting the cauldron to Bendigeidfran before the expedition to Ireland was thought of. And still, in spite of this alteration, he remained substantially true to his prototype and contrived that the magic cauldron should return to Ireland and be at the centre of the great conflict, just as it was in the tale about which *Preiddeu Annwn* was composed.[1] Thus the present framework of *Branwen* can be explained satisfactorily by the assumption that its author was influenced by the Cú Roí—Bláthíne tales.

Lest anyone should think that this linking of Irish and Welsh tales is altogether too arbitrary, it is worth pointing out that the Welsh story-teller was very probably acquainted with the Cú Roí cycle, whether he made use of it or not, for there can be no doubt that it was well known in contemporary Wales. Cú Roí's death is commemorated in a poem (*Marwnat Corroi M. Dayry*) in the *Book of Taliesin*,[2] and Gruffydd has argued convincingly that the account of Blodeuwedd's betrayal of Llew in *Math vab Mathonwy* was influenced by the story of Bláthnat's (Bláthíne's) betrayal of Cú Roí.[3] Moreover, various scholars have testified to the importance of these Irish tales for the study of the origins of Arthurian literature. In the words of one of them, R. S. Loomis, ' (they) exerted a great influence on early Welsh literature and also on a number of the stock themes of Arthurian romance. Indeed it is possible to assert that no other Irish sagas have impressed themselves so clearly and so frequently on the plots of the Arthurian cycle as has the group of tales centering round the figures of Cúroí, Cúchulainn, and Bláthnat. As we should expect, these stories passed through Wales.'[4]

[1] For the sake of convenience I have done here what a strict evaluation of the evidence does not quite warrant, namely identify the author of the Second Branch with the story-teller who joined the Branwen story to that of the expedition. To distinguish between them makes no difference to my argument.

[2] p. 66 ; cf. Cecile O'Rahilly, *Ireland and Wales*, pp. 127-9.

[3] *Math*, pp. 253, 263-71, 312-5.

[4] *Journ. of Engl. and Germ. Philol.* XLII, 155 f., where he cites the opinions of several other scholars to similar effect.

Once we have noted that the framework of the extant Second Branch has been formed by attaching Branwen to the expedition tale, the question which follows naturally is: First, did the story of Branwen's unhappy marriage ever exist independently of the Brân tale, and secondly, did she herself exist as a traditional figure prior to the final writing down of the Second Branch?

To the first part of the question we can only answer that there is no indication of the existence of an independent tale about Branwen's unhappy marriage apart from the fact that the Second Branch includes such a narrative. Consequently it will be more profitable to confine ourselves for the moment to the second part of the question. The most obvious point to be noted is that Branwen is commemorated in *Cadair Fronwen*, the name of the highest peak of the Berwyn range, to the south of the valley of the Dee.[1] The form in which her name is there preserved perhaps suggests that it is independent of the extant version of her story and, together with the other names in the same area of north-eastern Wales referring to Brân and Manawydan, testifies to the existence of legends about the family of Llŷr. But it does not necessarily follow that the legends attaching to the different members of the family possess equal antiquity. If the parental name Llŷr and that of Manawydan were really borrowed from Irish, then the Welsh family of Llŷr must in any case have come into existence as such at a later date. Moreover, while the relationship between Brân and Manawydan is attested in the Taliesin poems, there is no word of Branwen. We know that Brân was associated with north-east Wales, and this is sufficient to explain the place-names referring to him in that area. But the allusion to Branwen in Cadair Fronwen may well be later than these and may be consequent on her being included in the Brân legend.[2] That

[1] Anwyl, *Celtic Review* IV, 258.

[2] The name Bronwen is one which might have been extracted in the first place from a place-name like *y Fron Wen*, or, alternatively, might have formed secondary associations with such a name.

may have come about at almost any date down to the redaction of the Second Branch and may have been effected through a legend dealing with the north-eastern Brân and one completely different to that contained in the Second Branch. We have here the same element of doubt as, for example, in the matter of Branwen's grave. The Second Branch tells us that she was buried in a foursided grave on the bank of the Alaw in Anglesey. This implies that the person responsible for this passage, presumably the author of *Branwen*, knew of a tradition associating the heroine of his tale with a grave or monument such as he describes.[1] But, even if we accept the implication and take it for granted that he himself did not create the association, we have no means of knowing how much earlier it really is. Items of topographical lore do not necessarily require a long time to come into existence.

This brings us back to the question of Branwen's name. The couple of place-names already mentioned have the form *Bronwen* and this also occurs once in the White Book text of the tale.[2] Sir Ifor Williams expresses surprise at this form occurring in the main MS., but one wonders whether it is not possible that we have here the older spelling which was later assimilated to the name Brân. Of course, if this be correct, it is another indication that the Branwen legend is older than the extant Second Branch. It may be of some significance that the instance in the White Book occurs in connection with the second of two allusions to a triad describing Branwen as one of 'the three chief parents (ancestresses) of this island,' and that Sir Ifor Williams would regard this as one of two exceptions to his general conclusion that the triads of the Four Branches are later additions.[3] If the spelling *Bronwen* was written inadvertently by the author of the tale because it was in the earlier

[1] I. Williams (*Ped. Keinc*, p. 217) quotes Williams, *Eminent Welshmen*, p. 47, concerning a carnedd on the bank of the Alaw which was opened in 1813 and found to contain an urn 'full of ashes and half calcined fragments of bone.' The account adds that 'the very spot has always been called Ynys Bronwen.'

[2] *Ped. Keinc*, pp. 32, 174.

[3] op. cit., pp. xxx, 167.

triad which he was citing, it follows that some form of the legend of Branwen previously existed.

In the narrative of the relevant portion of the Second Branch, which, as I have already observed, is our main and almost our only source of information about *Branwen*, the most prominent element is what Gruffydd describes as the Calumniated Wife story, and next to it the onomastic tale of Talybolion. The latter tells how Efnisien interferes perversely in the affairs of Branwen and her Irish suitor. When agreement had been reached between Bendigeidfran and Matholwch, they feasted at Aberffraw and the Irish king slept with Branwen. On the next day the officers of the court billeted the horses 'in every quarter as far as the sea,' but subsequently Efnisien happened upon the billets of Matholwch's horses and asked whose horses they were. Not only was he told this, but he was informed that Matholwch had slept with Branwen. The idea that his sister should have been bestowed without his consent infuriated him, and he set upon the horses and mutilated them by cutting off their lips, ears, tails and eyelids. When this action was discovered Matholwch was of course enraged and he prepared to depart for Ireland. Hearing of his preparations Bendigeidfran sent messengers to proclaim his own innocence in the matter and to offer by way of compensation gold and silver and sound horses for those that had been mutilated. Matholwch accepted his proprosal and the feast recommenced—'And as they began to sit at the beginning of the feast, so sat they then.' But, in the course of their conversation Bendigeidfran observed that his guest appeared listless and sad, and, assuming that he was ill-satisfied with the amount of the reparation, promised to add to it the magic cauldron originally brought to Britain from Ireland by Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid. Furthermore, he assured him, the horses would be handed over on the following day. And so it was done. The horses were made over to Matholwch as long as tame horses lasted, whereupon they went to another commot, where the required number was made up with colts. And because of that the commot was henceforth known as Talebolion.

It is clear that this story about the horses is intended to explain the name *Tal y Bolion* under an incorrect form *Tal Ebolion*, in which the second element is the word for 'colts.'[1] Gruffydd goes further than this, however. According to him 'the episode of the Irishmen in the bags was first meant to be an explanation by *bolion*, 'bags,' of the name *Tal y Bolion*, but the significance of this original onomastic tale had been forgotten, and a later onomastic tale was inserted which explains *Tal y bolion* by *ebolion*, 'ponies'.'[2] It may be recalled that earlier in this study I tried to show that the episode of the Irishmen in the bags derives from an Irish tale. Apart from the evidence provided by a comparison of the texts, this view is supported by the fact that *Branwen* places the event in Ireland. If we agree with Gruffydd that the story was originally meant to explain the place-name in Anglesey, then we must in all probability assume that the incidents which *Branwen* describes as taking place in Ireland took place in Wales in an earlier version. That is possible, of course, but it would require rather more evidence than a bare place-name to make it seem at all likely, especially since the episode in question can be explained by reference to an Irish text which was very probably known to the author of *Branwen*.

The onomastic tale of Talebolion, it must be added, is not satisfactorily integrated into its context. It opens and closes in a rather awkward manner which points to interpolation, and, as we shall see presently, there are other indications that such is the case. Assuming this for the moment, what then was the sequence of events before the sub-tale was introduced? Perhaps something like this: Matholwch's suit is successful and he and his hosts begin the feast. But Bendigeidfran notices at length that he is less cheerful than before and divines the reason, namely that the dowry of gold and silver which has been promised with Branwen is not sufficient for his satisfaction. So the

[1] Cf. I. Williams, *Ped. Keinc*, p. 178 f. in notes to *kymwt arall* and *Tal Ebolyon*.

[2] *Cymm. Soc. Trans.*, 1946-7, 316; *Math*, p. 305; *Cymm. Soc. Trans*, 1912-13, 59, n.1. The story shows that the word *tâl*, 'brow of a hill,' was interpreted as *tâl*, 'payment.'

king of Britain immediately adds to it the magic cauldron of revivification.

But this first query is soon followed by another : If the Talebolion tale is an interpolation, is it then to be attributed to a later hand than that responsible for the shaping of the main narrative into which it has been inserted ? I suggest that this is not necessarily the case. In considering a matter of this kind it is well at the outset to rid ourselves of the idea that the writer of a medieval tale like *Branwen*, however accomplished he may have been, first gathered his materials together and then set about writing his tale smoothly and effortlessly from beginning to end. Inevitably ideas must have occurred to him in the middle of his composition, not all of which could be introduced without an element of disunity and even inconsistency, for he was not in the happy position of being able to consign to the waste-paper basket as many draughts as required emendation or expansion. This is, I feel, sufficient to explain the lack of cohesion in the part of *Branwen* under discussion. It was as an afterthought that our author saw the possibility of explaining the name Talebolion by the story of the colts. In it he perceived several advantages for his narrative. As an onomastic tale it imparted to his text something of local colour and it impressed the reader with Efnisien's wickedness and perverseness, which qualities were to be important at a later and more crucial stage of the tale.

Moreover, it has already been noted by Sir Ifor Williams that a mutilation passage very similar to that in *Branwen* occurs in the *Vita S. Cadoci*. It tells how a chief called Sawyl Benuchel came with his men to Cadog's monastery and, in the saint's absence, looted food and drink. When Cadog returned he allowed the robbers to indulge themselves until they were overcome by sleep and then had his monks shave off half the beard and hair of every sleeper as a sign of disgrace, ' and,' he added, ' also cut off the lips of their horses and their ears as well.'[1] As far as I am aware, there exists no other description in such terms either in early

[1] *Vitae SS. Britt.*, ed. A. W. Wade-Evans, p. 58.

Welsh or early Irish literature, and obviously there is every likelihood that one of the two passages in question had been derived from the other. It may be that the author of *Branwen* read of the humiliation of Sawyl Benuchel and that this was one of the considerations wich led him to compose the episode in which Efnisien maims Matholwch's ponies. Since the Life of St. Cadog was composed late in the eleventh century by Lifris of Llancarfan,[1] this suggestion is chronologically quite possible.

Consequently it is easy to understand how the writer came to include the onomastic tale, even though, as there are several loose ends to testify, he experienced some difficulty in joining it smoothly to the rest of his narrative. For, apart from the roughness of the seams, there are two examples of blatant inconsistency resulting from the introduction of the sub-tale. In the first place, for the purpose of this tale Matholwch had to have with him a large number of horses. Now, I am not sufficiently familiar with medieval ships and shipping to say offhand whether it was customary for those going on a sea-voyage to another land to bring their horses with them, but certainly there is no apparent reason why Matholwch and his men should have done so. They were only on a visit, not a campaign, and, in fact, when they went from Harddlech to Aberffraw, they made the journey by sea, although Bendigeidfran and his hosts went by land. I imagine the author of *Branwen* must have noticed this inconsistency, but, in the nature of things, he could only ignore it, or omit the story.

[1] According to H. D. Emanuel the date of the composition of the *Vita Cadoci* is probably about 1090 A.D. ('An Analysis of the Composition of the *Vita Cadoci*,' *Nat. Lib. of Wales Journ.* VII, 217 ff.). He concludes that the three chapters in it which centre around St. David and contain direct references to episodes in Rhygyfarch's *Life of St. David* are in fact later additions to Lifris's Life and therefore in no way imply a later date for the latter work. Instead, he suggests that Rhygyfarch wrote his Life a few years after the date of Lifris's composition and may even have done so by way of replying to this eulogy of Cadog.

It would follow from Emanuel's analysis that the mutilation incident referred to above was part of the original work composed by Lifris. Moreover, one cannot but note that this passage is in keeping with 'the streak of cruelty and the spirit of revenge which jar upon the reader' of this work (Cf. H. D. Emanuel, *The Latin Life of St. Cadoc*, unpublished thesis in library of Univ. Coll. of Wales, Aberystwyth, p. clxii f.).

The second difficulty was how to give Efnisien sufficient reason for acting so vindictively. I have suggested earlier that the writer was influenced by the Irish characters Bricriu and Sencha mac Ailella, notably as they occur in *Fled Bricrenn*, when he planned his treatment of Efnisien and furnished him in the opening of the text with a brother of contrasting personality. However that may be, he describes in the beginning how Bendigeidfran, Manawydan, Nisien, Efnisien and other noblemen saw the ships of the king of Ireland approaching them at Harddlech. Matholwch, having identified himself and informed them of his errand, namely to ask for Branwen, was invited ashore and eventually received their consent to his request. They set out from Harddlech to Aberffraw (again presumably for the purpose of the onomastic tale) and it was then that Efnisien learned of the marriage of Matholwch and Branwen and exacted his cruel revenge. Now, the opening of the tale shows that Efnisien was present when Matholwch arrived and disclosed that he had come to seek Branwen for his wife. No reason is given to suppose that Efnisien was not present at the subsequent proceedings, but, whatever of that, his presence in the initial scene is sufficient to contradict his supposed complete ignorance of Branwen's marriage. It is one of those flaws which are almost inevitable in a tale which is largely a composite of various elements. Of course the writer could have altered his opening scene if and when he noticed the contradiction occasioned by the later onomastic tale, but doubtless with him, as with many of us who live in an age where writing materials are much more easily come by, it required a certain amount of will-power to rewrite in the light of later additions what he had already phrased to his own satisfaction. Furthermore, with regard to this particular inconsistency in *Branwen*, it is easier to see how the writer himself accepted it if I was correct in my earlier suggestion that he was influenced in his portrayal of Efnisien by *Fled Bricrenn*. In the Irish text Bricriu invited the Ulstermen to a feast, and the whole crux of the matter is that they are fully aware of his mischievous propensities and know that

if they accept his invitation he will soon have them at one another's throats. In the end they consent to go only on condition that Bricriu retires from the house once the feast has been laid out, but, as it turns out, even this precaution does not save them from his machinations. If the author of *Branwen* had this tale in mind when writing his own text, it may to some extent explain his acceptance of the implied exclusion of Efnisien from the counsels of Bendigeidfran's court.

Undoubtedly the core and substance of the Branwen section of the Second Branch is the supposed version of the Calumniated Wife story which it contains. This, together with the version attached to Rhiannon in *Pwyll*, has been treated at some length by Gruffydd.[1] The theme concerns a king who has married a woman from another country, and who is urged by his jealous mother, or subjects, to get rid of her. To achieve their purpose her enemies bring certain charges against the king's wife: (i) that she has no children because she destroys or devours them at birth; (ii) that she is a demon or fairy, as is the real father of her child, which is consequently of the same nature as its parents and should be destroyed; (iii) that she has given monstrous birth to an animal (as in an earlier form of the Rhiannon version). Gruffydd points out that in the extant Rhiannon and Branwen stories the queen's punishment is not appropriate to her alleged crime. The significant feature of Branwen's penance is that she is struck (i.e. given a 'box') daily by the butcher, which would seem to imply that Branwen ought to have been charged with butchering her child. But, Gruffydd goes on, 'the latter part of CWB (the Branwen version of the Calumniated Wife theme) adds a new complexity, because Efnisien thrust the child into the fire to prove that he could be burnt and could not therefore be a demon child,' and he then proceeds to give a suggested outline of the 'primitive basis' of CWB, which it will be more convenient to quote in full:

> 'Branwen was hated because she was a foreigner, and therefore she was charged with being a fairy and consort-

[1] *Rhiannon*, p. 58 ff.

ing with demons. Now iron was taboo to a fairy and the basic condition on which a fairy consents to remain in a man's society was that she should never be touched with iron. So she is struck daily with an iron knife—the cyvarwydd using here for his own purpose a form of penance which was well known in CW (Calumniated Wife) stories where the queen, as in RRSP (the Rape of Rhiannon's son and Rhiannon's Penance), is accused of destroying her child. When the hosts of Wales come to Ireland to deliver her, Branwen herself (or one of her friends) proves that the child Gwern is an ordinary mortal by showing that, if thrust into the fire, he burns and does not disappear up the chimney as a demon-child would. And that is why he got his name of *Gwern Vorddwyd Tyllion* ' Gwern with-holes-in-his-thighs,' the holes being the result of the burns. [Later cyvarwyddon having no better understanding than we have of the jumble of words in the naming incident as quoted in the text made Morddwyd Tyllion into a separate person, as in *Kulhwch*, and the last cyvarwydd or the author made such a person pronounce the jumble of words in the text].'

The weakness of this reconstruction is precisely that it is almost entirely hypothetical and that, where we have some modicum of evidence by which to check it, it appears to be at variance with fact. Gruffydd extracts the descriptive name which he assigns to Gwern from the phrase, *Gwern gwngwch uiwch Uordwyt Tyllyon*, attributed to Morddwyd Tyllion in *Branwen*. To do this he has to regard the remaining words as inexplicable (' It is even not known whether the second and third words are Welsh or Irish '), although the whole phrase has been translated plausibly by Sir Ifor Williams as, 'Dogs of Gwern, beware of Morddwyd Tyllion.'[1] He also ignores the reference in the old Taliesin poem, which is in itself sufficient to disprove his theory that the name arose from a late misinterpretation of Gwern's epithet.[2] But even here, where he is palpably in error, it is conceivable that Gruffydd's idea is a distorted reflection of the truth. The allusion in the Taliesin poem is as follows :

Bum y gan vran yn iwerdon
Gweleis pan ladwyt *ymordwyt tyllon.*

[1] *Ped. Keinc*, p. 207 f.

[2] Cf. A. O. H. Jarman, *Llên Cymru* III, 128, where he offers a similar criticism and points out that, in any case, the name in *Culhwch* (WM pp. 461. 16 ; 503. 15) is *Echel uordvyt tull.*

The first time I read these lines, I instinctively took the second to be an expansion of the statement contained in the first ; that is to say, the poet, having accompanied Brân to Ireland, saw him wounded or slain there. Now that I have had some opportunity of considering the matter in greater detail, I am still not sure that this is not the correct interpretation. It would mean, of course, that the phrase *y mordwyt tyllon* referred to Brân, and its acceptability must depend on the significance to be attached to these words.

In *Culhwch ac Olwen* there is mention of a certain *Echel uordvyt twll* (WM 461. 16; 503. 15), which recalls the description of Gwên in *Canu Llywarch Hen* as *Gwen uordwyt tylluras*.[1] This last adjective may be compared with another occurring in the *Book of Aneirin* in the phrase *Gueleys y wyr tylluavr*.[2] Sir Ifor Williams suggests that the adjective *twll* contained in these expressions means ' big, thick,' and that *tyllyon* is merely another form of it comparable to *gwirion* from *gwir*.[3] On the other hand there is no reason why *twll, tyllion,* should not in a particular context have the more normal meaning ' pierced.' Consequently I would suggest translating the two lines quoted above as

I was with Brân in Ireland,
I saw when ' the Pierced (Thick) Thigh ' was slain (wounded).[4]

In the second line *mordwyt tyllon* would have the force of a synechdochic epithet applied to Brân. Its aptness as such if given the alternative meaning noted in brackets is attested by the reference from CO and CLlH, and it is in fact possible that both meanings are combined in the verbal play of the Welsh sentence. It may even be that the word *tyllon* was used by the poet to mean ' thick ' and later interpreted as ' pierced, wounded.' For one thing the second provides a perfect antecedent to the wound in the groin or the thighs (*en la guisse*, etc.) which incapacitated Chrétien de Troyes'

[1] Ed. I. Williams, p. 4.
[2] CA, p. 39, l. 976.
[3] Op cit., p. 70 f.
[4] One would think of translating this line as, ' I saw when *his* thick thigh was wounded,' except that the mutation of *m* is shown elsewhere in the poem.

Fisher King and several other Arthurian characters whom scholars derive from the Welsh Brân.[1] It can also be related to the wounding of Bendigeidfran in the foot (*yn y troet*) in *Branwen*.

To regard the words *mordwyt tyllon* as referring to Brân, and not as a distinct proper name, has the considerable merit of making sense of the several relevant allusions. Sir Ifor Williams has observed that the saying attributed to Morddwyd Tyllion in the Second Branch is probably a quotation from an old poem similar to that in the *Book of Taliesin*. Consequently, it is extremely likely that the two references were to the same series of incidents. In the tale alluded to in the Taliesin poem Brân seems to have been the leader of the expedition to Ireland, just as Bendigeidfran is in *Branwen*. Assuming that we are correct in taking *mordwyt tyllon* in the poem as referring to Brân, it would then be appropriate enough that in another poem alluding to the fight in Ireland, the words ' Dogs of Gwern, beware of Morddwyd Tyllion ' should be attributed to Brân as chief of the Britons. On the other hand, if we reject this idea, we must, with the author of *Branwen*, postulate a character called Morddwyd Tyllion who is otherwise unknown, in spite of the fact that he must have played a prominent part in the early tale. That is possible no doubt, but, in the circumstances, I suggest that the balance of probability is against it. And finally, let us not forget that according to the lines in the Taliesin poem the outstanding death in the tale upon which they were based was that of *y mordwyt tyllon*, or the person to whom this phrase referred, while in the Second Branch it was that of Bendigeidfran.[2]

But the proposed identification of Brân with *Branwen*'s Morddwyd Tyllion has certain possible implications with regard to the analysis of the Second Branch. Its author apparently took the epithet or phrase referring to Brân as

[1] Cf. Helaine Newstead, *Bran the Blessed*, pp. 62, 144, 176, 179, 188.

[2] Cf. again the lines from BBC 99, ll. 13-14;
*mi a wum in lle llas Bran*
*mab y werit clod lydan*
' I have been in the place where Brân was slain, the son of Iwerydd (or ' of the ocean '), of far-flung fame.'

the proper name of another character. This, together with the manner in which he introduced the quotation, suggests that to him it was nothing more than a quotation and that he knew little about its background or associations apart from the fact that it was concerned with Brân's expedition to Ireland and his fight with the Irish. The inference is that the writer of *Branwen* was relying to a considerable extent upon references in poems when composing his tale, and that, even when he preserves incidents from early tales or tradition, the context may be largely of his own creation.

The question now is: If he mistakenly saw in his borrowed quotation a reference to a distinct character called Morddwyd Tyllion, how can we be sure that he was aware of the original role played by Gwern, and, if so, that he did not choose to alter it? For all we know at present Gwern might have been—though I am not for a moment seriously suggesting it—the leader of the Irish who defended the cauldron which Brân had gone to take possession of, in other words the prototype of Odgar son of Aedd, the king of Ireland in *Culhwch*, or even of his overseer Diwrnach, who owned the cauldron sought by Arthur. In fact, if we accept Sir Ifor Williams' rendering of the obscure sentence in *Branwen*, it would appear somewhat more appropriate to such a view of Gwern than that presented in the Second Branch, where he belongs as much to the Britons as to the Irish.[1]

[1] I have referred earlier to the place-name evidence for the association of the family of Llŷr with north-east Wales. It may be noted that the place called Gwyddelwern is near Bryn Saith Marchog, which is to be connected with the Seith Marchawg mentioned in *Branwen*. Considering the position of Gwyddelwern and the fact that the author of *Branwen* and his predecessors were obviously aware of Brân's association with the whole area, it is by no means impossible that the personal name Gwern has been extracted from the place-name. Anwyl suggests that this was one of the place-names containing the word *Gwyddel* which prompted the allusion in *Branwen* to Irish settlements in Wales (ZCP III, 133 f.).

Again, Sir Ifor Williams, when commenting on the obscure sentence attributed to Morddwyd Tyllion, notes that *Gwern* could be the common noun meaning 'alder, alder-swamp,' but, having regard to the context he assumes that it must be a personal name. Is it not just possible that our author arrived at a similar solution to the same problem, and that, completely ignorant as he was of the true meaning of the sentence which stood divorced from its proper context, he drew from it a second personal name, Gwern, which he used for the purpose of his tale?

The same curtain of doubt hangs over much of the remainder of Gruffydd's reconstruction. It is because Gwern is killed through being thrust into the fire that he infers that Branwen was accused of being a fairy and consorting with demons. But it is as well to keep in mind that the incident in question fits into its present context sufficiently well to have been made for it in the first place. Efnisien is, like Bricriu, ' no man's man ' and always on the alert to seize any opportunity of causing dissension—and in this particular situation the key-figure is Gwern, son of Matholwch and Branwen, who has just been invested with the kingship of Ireland. How could he more easily set the newly reconciled Britons and Irish at variance than by his blatant and outrageous act in thrusting the young king into the fire? Consequently, as the evidence stands, we must allow the possibility that this incident is the invention of the author, and not a distorted vestige of a primitive Welsh tale. And yet perhaps ' invention ' is too absolute a word, for the author may have come across such a situation in some quite un-related tale. Indeed, it has been pointed out by Alfred Nutt that striking analogies to this section of *Branwen* are found in a number of Teutonic tales belonging to the Nibelung and Gudrun cycles.[1] These occur mainly in the *Volsunga Saga*, the *Nibelungenlied*, *Thidreks Saga*, the *Older Edda*, the *Epic of Gudrun*, and a Faroese ballad belonging to the Nibelungen cycle. Nutt sees in them

> ' not only a sameness of motive and general treatment with the *Mabinogi* of Branwen but a wonderfully close similarity in many of the subsidiary incidents. All deal with the fortune of a woman who, having gone over sea to a strange king, is, from one reason or another, visited by her kinsman, and the result of this visit is woe and slaughter, and the final death of the heroine. Looking more closely at the stories, hardly a prominent feature in the *Mabinogi* but finds its parallel in some one or other of the Teutonic hero tales. The Welsh Evnissyen . . . corresponds exactly to the ' Grimme Hagen ' of the *Nibelungen Lied*. Matholwch woos Branwen in person, as does Siggeir Signe, he is insulted by Evnissyen as Siggeir by Siegmund, and in both

[1] *Folk-lore Record* V, 17 ff. The similarity was first noticed by Rhŷs, *Studies the Arthurian Legend*, p. 266.

> cases the wrath is stilled for a time to break out the fiercer afterwards. The subjection of Branwen is like that of the epic Gudrun, and in both cases (though in very dissimilar connection) a bird heralds the *dénouement*. The struggle in the hall is common to nearly all the versions and the hiding of the Irish warriors in the bags may be compared to that of Siegmund and Sinfjötle behind the meal-jars (*r.* beer-jars).'

He further points to the fact that in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Thidreks Saga* and in all the versions deriving directly from them, the death of the heroine's child by the strange king is, as in the *Mabinogi*, the immediate cause of the final struggle, and that ' the cauldron of revivification is paralleled by the magic power of Hilde, and of the Faroese Gudrun.'[1]

Whether this section of *Branwen* has been influenced by the Teutonic tales, as suggested by Nutt, is extremely doubtful. In the first place, as has been aptly pointed out by B. G. Charles in this connection, likeness of motif or of general situation does not necessarily prove borrowing.[2] What must first be demonstrated is a convincing agreement in detail and circumstance, and this, I suggest, is lacking between *Branwen* and the Teutonic tales. Secondly, Nutt has gathered his collection of parallels from all of the latter tales, although he would scarcely suggest that the Welsh story-teller did likewise. Such a method of proving literary influence is justified only when there already is evidence that the author of the supposedly secondary work was familiar with the whole extent of the literature from which the parallels are cited, but we have no evidence of such familiarity in the case of *Branwen*, nor, in fact, in Welsh literature as a whole. Moreover, it might be argued that Nutt's summary of his suggested parallels is really more impressive than the parallels themselves. Taken singly, most of them are too trivial or of too general a character to possess much significance. For instance he compares

[1] It is worth noting, however, that A. H. Krappe adjudges the revivification in the Faroese ballad to be of Celtic origin (*Balor With the Evil Eye*, pp. 139-153).

[2] *Old Norse Relations with Wales*, p. 81.

Siegmund and Sinfjötle hiding behind the beer-casks to the Men in the Bags in *Branwen*, but in reality the only thing common to both episodes is the idea of men hiding somewhere in a house with the purpose of encompassing a killing. The essential point in the Welsh account—as in the Irish text compared with it above—is that it constitutes an elaborate trick by which one host plans to overcome another ; yet this is entirely missing in the *Volsunga Saga* narrative. In the latter the children (there are two of them) are slain by one of the hidden men, whereas in *Branwen* it is one of the Britons who does the killing, by putting Gwern into the fire. What similarity we find between these two passages is scarcely close enough to warrant our assuming borrowing from one to the other. The same may well be said of the total of the listed parallels between *Branwen* and the Teutonic tales. While they are not by any means to be rejected out of hand, they must be supported by some convincing evidence of Teutonic, or even merely Scandinavian, influence on Welsh literature, before they can seriously be considered as borrowings.

Nutt's examination of the evidence leads him to the conclusion ' that the affinities of *Branwen* are with . . . the Northern rather than with the more specifically German forms' (it should be noted, however, that the evidence is by no means decisive on this point), but he does acknowledge that the ' child-killing incident ' in the Welsh tale is more like that in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Thidreks Saga* than in their Northern counterparts ; and this, it may be recalled, was precisely the incident that caused us to digress from the discussion of Gruffydd's theory on the significance of Gwern's death. In the *Nibelungenlied* it is recounted how Kriemhild, the widow of Siegfried, was wooed by Etzel king of the Huns and accepted him in the hope of finding a way to wreak vengeance for her husband's death on Hagen and on her brother Gunther. After thirteen years she persuaded Etzel to invite her kinsmen on a friendly visit, while she planned all the while to bring about their destruction. Eventually it happened in the course of the feasting that Hagen heard how a number of his compatriots

had been attacked and slain by a party of Huns. Without warning he seized his sword and slew the young son of Kriemhild and Etzel, sending his head flying into his mother's lap. This was the signal for the grim slaughter to commence (In *Thidreks Saga* the queen herself is responsible for bringing about the death of her son so that Etzel may be aroused to take revenge on her kinsmen. This aspect has, it is suggested, been toned down in the *Nibelungenlied*). Now, even if we reject Nutt's suggestion that this German narrative is part of the source-material drawn upon by the author of *Branwen*, it does at least show—especially in its *Thidreks Saga* form—that the killing of Gwern by Efnisien need not necessarily be invested with any deeper significance than is constituted by its purely narrative value.

I have put forward these few objections to Gruffydd's reconstruction of the Calumniated Wife story because they exemplify his tendency to create neat rounded patterns from fragmentary evidence, while ignoring other possible interpretations of some of the fragments. This is frequently the case even where his central theory is extremely plausible, as in the present instance. As we have seen, there are certain indications that some form of the Branwen legend preceded the extant Second Branch. If the occurrence of the spelling *Bronwen* represents the survival of an older form of the name, it points to the prior existence of such a legend. So does the Triad describing her as one of 'the three chief ancestresses of this island,' if Sir Ifor Williams is correct in regarding it as part of the original text of the Second Branch. This leaves us with two possibilities: On the one hand, even if we conclude from these fragments of evidence—and from the place-name in which Bronwen occurs in association with Brân and Manawydan—that there existed a legend (or legends) about Branwen before the Second Branch was composed, it does not inevitably follow that it was similar in content to the relevant section of the latter; on the other, we can assume with Gruffydd that it was. If the former possibility be allowed, then it may be suggested that it was the author, or a previous redactor, of the tale who

created that part of the narrative which relates to Branwen, drawing his material more or less arbitrarily from popular story-patterns. And in this connection it may be remarked that the only element of this narrative which fits unambiguously into Gruffydd's reconstruction is the hardship and humiliation imposed upon the queen, and this is a common feature of literary tales and folk-tales other than those belonging to the Calumniated Wife theme.[1] If, however, we assume that what is told of Branwen in the Second Branch does derive from the earlier Branwen legend, then it is natural that we should begin to reason more or less on the same lines as Gruffydd. But, once again, our conclusions will depend upon our choice of alternatives. The first is that the earlier Branwen legend at some time or other stood independent of the story of Brân, in which case it must have existed as a complete narrative in itself and, consequently, we are justified in attempting a reconstruction of the whole, as Gruffydd has done ; the second, that the Branwen legend was from the outset attached to that of Brân. This, however, would almost certainly mean that some story-teller had introduced into the tale of Brân's voyage to Ireland a new narrative dealing with Branwen, and one which—it may be emphasized—was probably formed expressly to suit its context from popular story-elements. We would therefore have no right to reconstruct a complete version of the Calumniated Wife theme by pressing into service every detail of the extant narrative which might conceivably be accomodated to it.

The difficulty with Gruffydd's treatment of the subject is that he appears to ignore the existence of these alternatives. When in *Math* he offered an outline of his conclusions with regard to the growth of the *Mabinogi* as a whole, he designated ' the numerous stories in *Branwen* (e.g. *The Iron House*) ' as having been introduced earlier than the Calumniated Wife story.[2] As we have already seen, most of the former episodes

[1] It is characteristic of the various types of the Cinderella theme, cf. Marian R. Cox, *Cinderella, passim.* In many instances the heroine's servitude is marked by her acting as cook or scullion and being struck with different objects.

[2] op. cit., p. 328 f.

were in all probability introduced by the author of the Second Branch as we know it, so that the Calumniated Wife story could not in fact have been any later, but the interesting point is that Gruffydd then regarded the Calumniated Wife theme (CWB) as an extremely late and foreign element in the composition of *Branwen* ('Lastly came important contaminations from English or, less probably, French sources'). It is to be presumed from his later treatment of this episode that he had in the meantime altered his view somewhat in this respect, but, unfortunately, he never gave a clear and unambiguous statement of his new position. He proposes a reconstruction of the 'primitive basis' of CWB which would suggest that it had once existed as a complete and separate tale, but he does not expressly divorce it from the basic content of the Second Branch and it is worth noting that he embodies in it as much as is convenient of the framework of the tale of Brân's voyage to Ireland. His dilemma is obvious: scarcely any of the elements of his reconstruction are clearly reflected in the Second Branch. For example, there is no personal accusation against Branwen: she is not struck with an iron knife, and, to confuse matters, she is struck by the butcher: Efnisien, and not Branwen, thrusts Gwern into the fire; and while the theory requires that Gwern survive the trial by fire, yet the extant text gives us to understand clearly enough that he was killed by Efnisien; otherwise we would have to assume that he did disappear up the chimney like a veritable fairy, since there is no trace of him in the remainder of the tale.[1] The fact is that

[1] In Gruffydd's reconstruction (p.161 supra) it is Branwen herself (or one of her friends) who puts Gwern into the fire, in order to prove that the child will burn and is therefore an ordinary mortal. Elsewhere he attaches much importance to the manner in which this incident is recounted: 'It is probable that in an older version it is Branwen herself who held the child in the flames; the curious detail of seizing him by the feet suggests holding him *for a time* in the blaze rather than throwing him into the fire, which could be much more effectively done by taking hold of him bodily. As usual in the Mabinogion when two conflicting versions have to be harmonized, the *cyfarwydd*, knowing that tradition said that the act was Branwen's or even perhaps that Branwen had jumped with the child into the fire, covered himself against criticism by saying that Branwen *attempted* to leap into the blaze after him . . .' (*Folklore and Myth in the Mabinogion*, p.16 f.). This appears to be an important argument in support of Gruffydd's theory and deserves close scrutiny as such. It is scarcely necessary to point out that, in itself, the fact that Branwen 'made as if to leap into the fire' after her child is evidence of nothing more than a

Gruffydd cannot quite visualize his hypothetical Branwen legend independently of that of Brân, and yet, to justify his inclusion of elements not found in the Second Branch, as well as to explain the inconsistencies of the whole, he must assume that it existed as a separate tale resulting from a considerable period of oral development.[2]

If we choose to reject Gruffydd's conclusion, it does not follow that we must reject his whole argument. The alternative is obvious. The Second Branch is largely a composite of diverse elements chosen arbitrarily from Welsh and Irish literature, and there is no compelling reason why we should make an exception of the episode in question. Gruffydd himself notes that in CWB 'the author or cyvarwydd is dealing with' a narrative which 'contains the beginning of more than one story, the middle of some, and the end of others,'[3] and surely it is not unreasonable to see in this diversity additional testimony to the eclectic nature of the whole composition of *Branwen*. That is to say, the author or a predecessor borrowed just as much as he required for his immediate purpose of the theme of the heroine

normal maternal reaction. The important point is that Efnisien seized Gwern by the feet before thrusting him headlong into the blazing fire. There is, I suggest, a simpler explanation for this than that offered by Gruffydd. The hall in *Branwen* would have had an open central hearth as opposed to a wall-hearth (see I.C. Peate, *The Welsh House*, p.116-26; *Antiquity* XVI, 66: cf. Bruce, *Evolution of Arth. Rom.* I, 275), and it probably would have been rather difficult to throw someone bodily into a fire in this position. For quick and sure results Efnisien's method could scarcely have been bettered. Rather than giving support to Gruffydd's theory, it is possible that the phrase in question is an interesting allusion to the internal arrangement of the hall envisaged by the writer of *Branwen*.

[2] His reluctance to treat CWB independently of the tale of Brân's expedition, as his reconstruction demands, is evidenced by a couple of points from the summary of his analysis of *Branwen* recently published by A.O.H. Jarman (*Llên Cymru* IV, 129 ff.; see App. infra). It is there suggested that it was towards the end of the Dark Ages that the Calumniated Wife theme was joined to the story of Brân's journey to Ireland, thereby establishing the extant pattern of the Second Branch. But this is scarcely consistent with the view that it was 'the author himself or his immediate predecessor' who brought together CWB and other parts of the Second Branch (*Rhiannon*, p.10). Another suggestion is that Branwen was created simply by appending the adjective *gwen* to the name *Bran*. This looks feasible enough at first sight, but it does imply that her legend was attached to that of Brân's voyage from the very outset and it would, moreover, weaken the evidence on which I based my assumption that a legend about her did exist prior to the composition of the extant Second Branch.

[3] *Rhiannon*, p.62.

humiliated and reduced to the position of a menial. Sources were not hard to come by, and it may be presumed that they were used in much the same way as were those others which have been discussed in the course of this study.

To sum up, the story of Branwen's stay in Ireland was joined to, or superimposed upon, a story of an expedition by Brân to Ireland, a variant of that alluded to in the poem *Preiddeu Annwn*, by the author of the Second Branch, or, more probably, by an earlier story-teller. The Branwen tale may have constituted an independent version of the Calumniated Wife theme, but a more cautious interpretation of the evidence will not allow us to go beyond concluding that the story-teller created his new narrative out of materials borrowed from popular versions of the theme. And it is there, on such a note of doubt and indecision, that we must leave aside for the present the history of the tragic daughter of Llŷr.

# VIII

## THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

### Review of the Composition of *Branwen*

In summarizing the probable history of the tale it will be most convenient to begin with Gruffydd's theory that the Four Branches originally constituted the life-story of Pryderi.[1] In *Math* he refers to Irish literature, where we find, for example, accounts of the hero's birth (*compert*), death (*aided*) and boyhood exploits (*macgnímartha*). This led him to infer the following pattern for the original Pryderi cycle :

(i) *Compert :* The Conception and Birth of Pryderi.
(ii) *Macgnímartha :* The Youthful Exploits of Pryderi.
(iii) *Indarba :* The Imprisonment of Pryderi.
(iv) *Aided :* The Death of Pryderi.

Unfortunately, this correlation of Irish and Welsh literature was not quite accurate. In the first place, the word *indarba* means ' banishment,' not ' imprisonment,' and it is not used as a title in the way suggested by Gruffydd.[2] Secondly, while there are Irish tales about the hero's boyhood feats, there are very many more which tell of his deeds as a grown man, and there is nothing we know of Pryderi which suggests that his exploit corresponds to the former class rather than to the latter.

Gruffydd himself probably realized these weaknesses in later years, for, when he came to write *Rhiannon*, he made appropriate alterations to his outline of Pryderi's cycle of tales. He now speaks of the *Rape of Pryderi* in connection with the Third Branch and no longer regards his exploit as belonging to his boyhood. ' Pryderi,' he says, ' spent his youth at the Court of Dyved, and when he grew up, con-

[1] *Math*, pp. 324-9 ; see also *Rhiannon*, pp. 8-15.

[2] The only instance I can recall of its use in the title of a tale is in *Tucait Indarba na nDéssi* (' The Cause of the Expulsion of the Déssi '), one of the several designations of the story about the migration of this people.

ducted an attack upon Annwvn ... which originally constituted the second Branch, now called *Branwen.*' It follows then, that, if we accept Gruffydd's idea of the original purpose and plan of the *Mabinogi*, it is not primarily on account of any Irish evidence, but because the birth, death and adventures of the hero are universally popular subjects and because his idea provides a satisfactory underlying unity for the four tales.

At the beginning of this study (p. 3 f.) I gave a resumé of the conclusions which Gruffydd published in *Math* with regard to the development of the Second Branch from its primary form, Pryderi's exploit, to its final form, the tragedy of Branwen. If he had come to complete his proposed study of *Branwen*, he would almost certainly have modified these conclusions, just as he did with his outline of the Pryderi cycle; in fact, as I pointed out earlier, his treatment of the Calumniated Wife story in *Rhiannon* is not quite consistent with his analysis of the Second Branch in *Math.* Consequently the best thing I can do here is to summarize those conclusions which I see fit to draw from my own examination of the tale :

The poem *Preiddeu Annwn* shows that there once existed a tale about an expedition to the Otherworld led by Arthur with the object of gaining possession of a precious cauldron. We have noticed the similar adventure associated in Irish literature with Cú Roí mac Dáiri and Cú Chulainn, and have observed that, whereas the former is usally the dominating figure who brings the undertaking to a successful issue, there is one account which makes Cú Chulainn solely responsible for leading the raid. The same type of substitution probably took place in Welsh literary tradition, so that there may well have been an account of the Otherworld adventure which gave the principal role to Pryderi, especially if it formed part of a group of tales centred on this hero. However, it is not this version, but one dominated by Brân son of Llŷr, which is the basis of the Second Branch in its extant form. It is but a variant, or derivative, of the tale reflected in *Preiddeu Annwn*, as is shown by the fact that there are seven survivors in both. In the older

tale the Britons went to seize a wondrous cauldron, but, before they could escape with their booty, most of their number were slain. It is not hard to discern this pattern under the surface of *Branwen*, where we have first an expedition to Ireland in quest of something (the precise location of the Otherworld varied from tale to tale ; in *Culhwch* Arthur's expedition is to Ireland), secondly a cauldron (though its role has been altered), and finally a fierce conflict in which most of the Britons are slain.

In the Second Branch, however, the outline of the tale was obscured by the addition of the story of Branwen. This was effected by substituting her for the magic cauldron as the object of the expedition to Ireland, and, of course, such a change was inevitably accompanied by others. Exactly when this union of Branwen and the expedition tale took place remains doubtful. It may have been at the same time as Brân was made leader of the exploit or it may have been at any time between that and the date of the extant redaction. It is scarcely necessary to seek for an explanation as to why Branwen was made to displace the cauldron. To do so was the story-teller's privilege. But it is possible that he got the idea from the well known tales of the raid carried out by Cú Roí and Cú Chulainn, where Bláthíne (Bláthnat) was the main object and the cauldron an additional incentive.

The basis of the Branwen section of the tale was formed by incorporating certain elements from popular story-patterns. She went to Ireland as the wife of the Irish king and was there subjected to a period of humiliation and servitude until she finally got word to her brother by means of the helpful starling. From that to the end of the narrative is an adapted version of the early expedition in quest of the cauldron. It is clear from *Preiddeu Annwn* and *Culhwch* that this precious vessel was originally the focal point of the great fight, and it still remains so in the Second Branch in spite of the fact that it had been displaced from its original role by Branwen herself.

It was this framework that the author of the Second Branch transformed into a full and pleasing narrative by

introducing new incidents and situations, many if not most of them of Irish origin, and linking them skilfully into his pre-arranged pattern.

So much for the analytical approach to *Branwen* : but it is well to remember that it was written as a piece of literature and that it is undoubtedly as such it is accepted by the great majority of its present day readers. It is not without reason that its author is commonly regarded as one of the great prose narrators of the Middle Ages. I have just referred to his faculty for employing the most varied types of literary material in such a way as to avoid any undue impression of disunity or repetition, an aspect of his work which should have been illustrated amply by my investigation of his sources. In a way this really provides the key to his greatness ; his tendency was towards qualities we are accustomed to associate with a civilized and scholarly mind, order, proportion, clarity and economy. His sense of order and proportion is manifest in the arranging of his varied source materials. It was, for instance, his feeling for unforced symmetry and balance which made him visualize the fight in Ireland, not merely as the bond between the Branwen story and that of Bendigeidfran, but as the centre and climax of the whole tale. With this in mind he built it up into a developed sequence with its own action and motivation through the incorporation of the Great House episode and the vivid account of the actual fighting, both probably deriving from Irish literature. It is this narrative which fuses what might merely have been joined and gives something approaching an organic unity to the complete text.

His clarity and economy are seen primarily in his prose : it flows smoothly throughout, with only an occasional ripple to break the perfection of its surface, giving the impression of an author writing well within his powers and content to continue so. Never does he allow himself to be drawn by any incident or situation to discard his cloak of benign reserve and detachment : one wonders a little why such a man borrowed from Irish the exaggerated and grotesque description of Mac Cécht's face and used it in connection with Bendigeidfran, but one observes that, once he has done so, he treats it with the same cool discipline as

the remainder of his tale. Here, and at other points of his narrative, he would have been excused a somewhat freer use of words, whether to add point to a hyperbole or simply to set an atmosphere, but this, one feels, would have seemed to him too close to literary exhibitionism. Throughout the tale there is hardly more than a score of adjectives used in a descriptive sense, and some of these, like *teg*, *mawr* and *braf*, are conventional and almost entirely functional in their use. In one of the most successful passages, the account of the sojourn in Harddlech and Gwales, there is not a trace of actual description, in contrast to the colourful glimpses of the Otherworld we find in early Irish literature, and by this contrast another facet of our author's literary personality is illuminated. Where the Irish poet and storyteller gave a vividly subjective impression of the Otherworld as a land of colour and brightness and joy, his account, on the other hand, is objective and impersonal and conjures up a vision of timelessness and oblivion to the world's cares rather than active enjoyment of the Otherworld pleasures.

Such detachment and restraint as our author maintains from beginning to end might easily become tedious if unrelieved by other qualities—and indeed we are the better able to esteem *Branwen* for the knowledge that we can always turn to the waywardness and rich prodigality of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. That our palate does not weary is due mainly to two elements in his work. First there is the sinuous line of his prose with its subtle variation of rhythm offering unobtrusive relief to the reader's mind, as in the following passage, chosen almost at random, in which the opening of the forbidden door by Heilyn fab Gwyn is recounted : *Agori y drws a wnaeth, ac edrych ar Gernyw, ac ar Aber Henuelen. A phan edrychwys, yd oed yn gyn hyspysset ganthunt y gyniuer collet a gollyssynt eiryoet, a'r gyniuer car a chedymdeith a gollyssynt, a'r gyniuer drwc a dothoed udunt, a chyt bei yno y kyuarffei ac wynt ; ac yn benhaf oll am eu harglwyd.* The sense is finely reflected in the disposition of the words, the first clear taut phrases marking the irrevocable action, then the single verb *edrychwys* showing that, the very instant Heilyn looked towards

Cornwall, he and his companions were oppressed once more by their ancient cares, their number and burden mirrored in the sequence of three co-ordinate clauses echoing the word *cyniuer* and each containing the suggestive repetition of half-alliteration, and all this leading up to the brief statement of their greatest sorrow of all, the realization that they had lost their lord and sustainer, Bendigeidfran. One can be sure that the author would have been aghast at any such analysis of his style, but it is necessary to make the attempt in order to reveal the art which he himself so well concealed.

Our author's second antidote to incipient monotony is more consciously contrived. The principle is that the reader's interest is best retained by changing scene and incident before they may begin to pall. There is no need to illustrate this at length : the tale is one of continued movement, and the various secondary themes and episodes such as the onomastic tale of the maimed horses, the Iron House and the Men in the Bags, all help to vary the course of the narrative. We are never allowed to dwell too long on any one situation before the author gently draws us elsewhere. It is easy to appreciate why be borrowed so many heterogeneous materials in the course of his composition.

But all writers have their weaknesses, nor is the author of *Branwen* an exception to the rule. The obvious failing of his tale is in its characters—or in its lack of them. As I observed earlier, Efnisien is the only figure with the semblance of a personality ; yet even his is a stock personality, akin to the conventional representation of Bricriu, from whom I suggest he is drawn. Branwen herself is a shadowy wilting figure of whom it might be said with some truth that she never comes to life until she comes to die. Compared to the passionate, strong-willed Deirdre, she is but a shadow. Both are destined for tragedy, and yet how differently they face that destiny ; Deirdre winning what pleasure she may in spite of it and in the end facing it obstinate and defiant, Branwen morally passive throughout to whatever fate and her superiors have in store for her. On the other hand it is true, as I suggested earlier, that this passiveness adds to the

sense of inevitability in Branwen's tragedy, so that her lack of character may be to some degree its own compensation. In that case it might be attributed to our author's literary sensitivity, but to me it appears rather as one of the consequences of that constant reserve and detachment to which I have already referred.

THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF *Branwen*

In view of the Irish borrowings suggested in the earlier part of this article, it seems an obvious idea to examine the relevant material for any light it may throw on the date to be assigned to *Branwen*. Various scholars have suggested various dates, ranging from the early twelfth century to that in the second half of the eleventh (*c.* 1060) which Sir Ifor Williams has proposed on the basis of language and orthography ;[1] but the type of evidence available is not such as to lead to precise or conclusive results. Unfortunately most of the Irish borrowings are useless in this connection. Where themes have been borrowed—as, for instance, that of the Iron House—we can merely ascertain that it existed in Irish at a sufficiently early date to have been borrowed. Even where we have reason to believe that the Welsh storyteller used a certain Irish text, for example *Scéla Mucce meic Dathó* or the story of Cairbre Cattchenn,[2] usually we have only got a comparatively irrelevant *terminus post quem*. In fact the only useful instances are those in which the Welsh tale has made use of an Irish text which may be dated clearly within the eleventh or early twelfth centuries.

We have seen that the writer of *Branwen* had probably read *Fled Bricrenn*. I have suggested that his account of Llasar Laes Gyfnewid was influenced by the Uath episode in the Irish tale. This episode is one of a number of interpolations in the extant text which Thurneysen believes to have derived from a separate complete version of *Fled Bricrenn*. This version he would date about 1100.[3] But we can scarcely base any conclusions with regard to the

[1] *Pedeir Keinc*, xl-xli.

[2] On dating of this story see p. 37 sup.

[3] *Heldensage*, pp. 462, 668, 235 f.

Welsh text on this date, because, apart from its uncertainty, there is no guarantee that the Uath episode was newly created in the late version of the tale.

We might hope for a little more guidance from the Irish text *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, which I have put forward as the source of several passages in *Branwen*. In his generally accepted analysis of this tale Thurneysen points out that the extant text is a conflation of two different versions, which he identifies as A and B. Now, the description of Mac Cécht and the incident concerning Maine Milscothach's swineherd derive from A, while the Fer Caille passage belongs to B.[1] This indicates, though it does not prove, that the writer of *Branwen* used the conflated text of TBDD. To know that he did would be extremely convenient if we could assign the unified TBDD to a precise date, but unfortunately that is not possible. According to Thurneysen it belongs to the eleventh century, and probably about the middle of it.[2] This, obviously, does not enable us to narrow the limits of dating within which *Branwen* has been placed, but at least it tends to confirm the range of dating suggested by Welsh scholars, namely the latter part of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries.

After giving some thought to the possible date of *Branwen* it is inevitable that we should begin to form conjectures about its authorship. Nutt regarded the redaction of the Four Branches as 'a product and a sign of the national movement under Gruffydd ap Cynan (1075-1137) in North Wales, and Rhys ap Tewdwr (*c.* 1070-1093) in South Wales,'[3] and certainly one finds it difficult to dissociate the career of the former from our consideration of the circumstances which may have given rise to the Four Branches, and especially to *Branwen*. Born in Ireland Gruffydd spent the early years of his life among the Norse-Irish of Dublin until in the year 1075 he began his campaign to win the kingship of Gwynedd, which had once been held by his grandfather, Iago ap Idwal Foel, and subsequently after

[1] Cf. pp. 27 n. 2; 29 n. 2; 41, n.2.
[2] *Heldensage*, pp. 24-7, 626-7, 668.
[3] In his notes to his edition of Lady Guest's translation, p. 335.

each reverse he returned to Ireland to prepare for a renewal of the struggle. It is not unlikely that he had some acquaintance with Irish literature, for Norse Dublin was not necessarily isolated from native Irish cultural tradition any more than it was isolated from native Irish politics. He is, we know, credited with introducing Irish musicians and bards to Wales and with drawing up the collection of bardic regulations which date from the 15th–16th centuries. The first of these traditions seems not improbable in itself, and the second, while it cannot but be incorrect in point of fact, may reflect the idea that Gruffydd provided during his lifetime a channel of cultural communication between Ireland and Wales. Consequently Miss O'Rahilly sees in Gruffydd and his Irish followers the means by which ideas and incidents were borrowed from one literature to the other. 'Welsh and Irish,' she suggests, 'must have fraternized beside the camp fires and whiled away the watches with interchange of song and story. Irish bards at the feasts of old king Gruffydd must have made many an Irish tale familiar to Welsh audiences.' This sounds plausible enough when the Irish influence on Welsh literature is thought of in abstract terms, but we are here dealing with a particular text, *Branwen*, and for it such an explanation does not ring true. *Branwen* bears all the characteristics of a work composed and written in the study, and, if my examination of the Irish borrowings has shown anything, it has shown that the Welsh writer himself possessed a very considerable knowledge of Irish literature, probably in written form, or else had constantly by him those who did.

The man who wrote *Branwen* was almost certainly a scholar with the leisure and the inclination to divert his gifts of learning to the creation of such literature of enterment. If one were to compare the background in which Irish literature was cultivated in these early centuries, one would note that the men who redacted the old tales and formed new ones from the debris of tradition were for the most part members of the communities in certain well known monastic seats of learning. It was in the monasteries that the judgement and taste of the classical scholar were

united with an enthusiasm for native tradition and literature. If this means anything in terms of Welsh literature, then the most likely place to look for the author of *Branwen* is in a Welsh monastic community, in that same cultural atmosphere which produced Nennius and Gerald and Geoffrey.

To go further than this and begin to speculate on his actual identity may seem to pass beyond the bounds of legitimate enquiry. After all, it may be argued, Welsh monasteries were numerous during the period in question and it can be assumed that many monks were then engaged in literary activity whose names are for ever lost; those few names which do remain represent only a fraction of the total and no conclusions may be based upon the fact that fate has preserved them rather than others. Against this it may be said that the survival of the type of names we have to do with, that is to say those of clerics who wrote Latin hagiographical texts, is not in fact quite so much a matter of chance. Theirs is a different position to that of the traditional *cyfarwyddiaid*, and if their names survive, it is as likely as not because their work had a prestige denied to the common run of hagiographical compositions. Secondly, and this is more important, I feel it is necessary in a study of this sort to consider at all points the various possibilities suggested by the extant evidence. Merely to discuss any particular possibility is not to accept it as true, but it may, if the evidence is presented fairly, be more illuminating than a bald statement of the closely relevant facts. Even if our speculation on the identity of the author of *Branwen* can never lead to a certain conclusion, it can at least give us an idea as to what type of person he was and in what circumstances he wrote.

Probably the two most important Lives written within the period to which *Branwen* has been assigned are the *Vita David* by Rhygyfarch (Ricemarch) and the *Vita Cadoci* by Lifris of Llancarfan. The contents of both betray definite Irish influence,[1] but in the former this is much

[1] C. H. Slover, 'Early Literary Channels between Ireland and Wales,' *Univ. of Texas Bulletin, Studies in English* no. 7, p. 89 ff.

more extensive and less confined to hagiographical material. This calls for a little explanation.

Rhygyfarch's father was the noted Sulien (+1091) who was born early in the second decade of the eleventh century, went to Ireland sometime before 1059, remained there for thirteen years, returned to Wales and established a school of learning at Llanbadarn Fawr and subsequently was chosen bishop of St. David's, which office he held for a total of twelve years, interrupted by a period of retirement.[1] The best known of Sulien's pupils were his four sons, Arthen, Daniel, Ieuan and Rhygyfarch, and of these Rhygyfarch (+1099) appears to have been the most distinguished by his learning. He compiled a psalter and martyrology, which was actually written by a certain Ithael, presumably a member of the monastic community, and illuminated by his own brother Ieuan. It has been suggested that the martyrology is based upon an Irish original.[2] This Irish influence is confirmed by the *Vita David*, which contains a number of parallels to passages in the Irish Lives of the Saints, whence they have obviously been borrowed. These have been discussed at length by Vendryes, who goes further, however, and points out other passages containing themes that can be traced back to Irish tradition and literature.[3] These latter are concentrated in the section of the Life recounting Boia's unsuccessful attempt to prevent the saint from establishing himself within his territory and the question of origins is summed up thus by Vendryes : 'Il est probable que Rhygyfarch a eu, comme il le dit, entre les mains des documents traditionnels dont il s'est inspiré. L'un de ces documents devait être un récit de la lutte entre Boia et David pour la possession de Glyn Rosyn. Comme Boia était Irlandais d'origine et sans doute chef d'un établissement irlandais dans la region de Mynyw, il est

[1] J. E. Lloyd, *History of Wales* II, 459-61 ; *The Story of Ceredigion*, p. 29ff. ; *Nat. Lib. of Wales Journ.* II, 1 ff. ; H. J. Lawlor, *The Psalter of Ricemarch* I, xii-xvii ; C. H. Slover, op. cit., p. 80 f.

[2] Lawlor, op. cit., p. xxxiv ; Slover, loc. cit.

[3] *Choix d'Études Linquistiques et Celtiques*, p. 287 ff. (=RC XLV, 141 ff.).

naturel que de nombreux souvenirs de la légende irlandaise se soient glissés dans le récit qui le montrait en lutte avec saint David.' Even if he be correct in regarding the Irish non-hagiographical elements in the Boia story as traditional in origin rather than literary, they still bear witness to the strong and tenacious Gaelic influence in the district of Dyfed about which Rhygyfarch wrote.

Since we have no cause to believe that Rhygyfarch himself was ever in Ireland, it is reasonable to suppose that most of the Irish hagiographical material incorporated in his *Vita David* was obtained from his father Sulien. The latter had lived in Ireland for thirteen years and had presumably learned Gaelic during that time; and—although we are reduced to surmise on this score—it is quite likely that his stay was spent in one or other of the Irish monasteries in which the native secular literature and the Lives of the Saints were then being composed or redacted. We gather from the poem by his son Ieuan what is already implied by Rhygyfarch's Life of St. David, namely that Sulien on his return to Wales imparted to others the knowledge that he had acquired in Ireland :

> . . . *Congregat inmensam pretioso pondere massam,*
> *Protinus arguta thesaurum mente recondens—*
> *Post haec ad patriam remeans iam dogmate clarus*
> *Uenit, et inuentum multis iam diuidit aurum.*[1]

This suggests an interesting possibility with regard to *Branwen*, namely that Sulien himself returned from Ireland after having made himself familiar with Irish literature, and that, having been a witness to the redaction of native literature which was then in full progress there, he subsequently set about re-moulding certain Welsh traditions with the help of materials borrowed from Irish texts; or alternatively, and perhaps more probably, that Sulien provided the *matiere d'Irelande* for his son Rhygyfarch to work upon, just as he must have done in the case of *Vita David*. With respect to the latter alternative, his constant co-operation and counsel would explain why Rhygyfarch's composition

[1] A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Eccl. Docs. relating to Great Britain and Ireland* I, 666.

shows such a considerable knowledge of Ireland and its literary traditions.[1]

The position is that we have two texts, one hagiographical and in Latin, the other secular and in Welsh, both written about the same period and both deriving much of their content from Irish sources. The former, we know, was written by Rhygyfarch, son of the bishop of St. David's, and its narrative was centred upon Dyfed and drew upon the traditions of that area ; the latter was the work of an unknown author presumably a monk, who according to Sir Ifor Williams, was from Dyfed.[2] Sir Ifor's deduction is based upon the fact that the connecting link between the Four Branches is the life of Pryderi, the hero of Dyfed,[3] and upon several allusions in the tales which seem to betray an attachment to Dyfed and sympathy with its people.[4] In the case of Rhygyfarch associations with the same area are attested to some extent by his Life of St. David, and that these were rather more than formal literary associations may be deduced from his poem ' which records the tribulations which befell the Welsh of Deheubarth as the result of the Norman irruption of 1093 and reproaches them for their feeble resistance to the invader.'[5]

[1] In this connection, mention must be made of Lawlor's comment on the Life of David : ' In spite, however, of his use of Irish sources, Ricemarch's knowledge of Ireland can scarcely have been very exact. He apparently confused St. Maedoc with St. Modomnoc, and he calls the monastery of the former Guernin (*l.* Ferna)—a place which he seems to have located in the north of the island ' (op. cit., p. xvii). It is indeed true, as Lawlor says, that a story about Maedoc is inserted between two others concerning Modomnoc, although Maedoc has been the subject of earlier sections, where he is called by his original name Aidan. But the wording of the text in no way implies that the writer confused Modomnoc and Maedoc and indeed the opposite is indicated by the fact that in the inserted story he speaks of *Maidoc qui Aidanus ab infantia* (ed. Wade-Evans, § XLII). Similarly Lawlor impugns Rhygyfarch's knowledge of Irish geography on the basis of an erroneous interpretation of the adjective *aquilento*, which really refers to St. David in his role of *dyfyrwr* or ' waterman.'

[2] Sir Ifor is speaking of the man who joined together into one *Mabinogi* the stories of North and South, but his references to the text show that he is indentifying him with the person responsible for redacting the stories more or less in the form in which we know them.

[3] This is perhaps less convincing in that Pryderi's original role in the cycle of tales has been obscured in the extant redaction.

[4] *Ped. Keinc*, pp. xxii, xxxix.

[5] J. E. Lloyd, *Hist. of Wales* II, 460. The poem is printed by Lawlor in his *Psalter of Ricemarch* I, 121-3.

This summary of the evidence shows that a reasonable case could be made for attributing *Branwen*—and the *Mabinogi* as a whole—to Rhygyfarch or his father Sulien, or to the two in collaboration. It is an attractive possibility but in view of the gaps in our knowledge of the general background of the period, it can scarcely ever become more.

## Conclusion

In concluding this study I should like to emphasize that my main object was to examine the story of *Branwen* in the light of early Irish literature and to ascertain, if possible, the extent to which its author is indebted to that literature for his material. A secondary consideration was to gain some idea of the origin and development of Welsh elements of the tale by discussing the form of their Irish analogues. Thus, I have included amongst the suggested borrowings from early Irish one or two instances which I should not like to press too strongly on the reader—as I have indicated sufficiently, I hope, by the tenor of my argument—but even these may be instructive in their own way. Moreover, I have tried to present the evidence fully and fairly so that the reader may accept or reject at will the conclusions formed from it. But, after making due allowance for faulty conclusions, there is sufficient evidence to show clearly that the author of *Branwen* was very considerably influenced by Irish literature in the style and content of his narrative. The themes and episodes which can be traced back to Irish sources reflect these sources with various degrees of fidelity, for how the author used any particular borrowing depended not only on his personal taste and reaction as a story-teller and writer, but to an even greater extent on the nature of the particular text in which it was being incorporated. This has been borne out sufficiently in the course of our investigation of some of the incidents in *Branwen* whose derivation from Irish literature can scarcely be questioned.

Obviously the Irish material in *Branwen* is extremely important for a proper analysis of the structure and content of that tale, but there are also more extensive grounds on which it may claim our attention. It is commonly accepted

nowadays that a large part of the raw material of the French Arthurian tales was Celtic in origin, and much of it can be traced back to sources in early Irish literature. Most of this Irish contribution to the Arthurian cycle we may presume to have reached it by way of Wales, although there is no great body of evidence in Welsh literature to demonstrate this process in its intermediate stage. Consequently one of the many virtues and attractions of *Branwen* is precisely that it preserves for us, as it were frozen into immobility, one of the literary streams which flowed from one side of the Irish sea to the other. Let us look for a moment at a single and, at first sight, rather unimportant instance of possible Irish influence mentioned in this study. I there pointed that the plan of the great house built for Brân in Ireland conforms to that of the well-known houses described in Irish sagas, and furthermore I suggested that the huge dimensions of Brân's house were due to the prevalent Irish view that the famous houses of tradition, and above all the royal hall at Tara, were distinguished and characterized by their size. Since then I noticed a reference to an article by W. A. Nitze in which he presents the hall of Tara as an analogue to the castle of the Grail.[1] If his argument be correct, then *Branwen* will give us some idea of how the legendary hall of the Irish kings was translated into the realms of Arthurian romance.

Once I had investigated the possible borrowings from Irish literature in *Branwen*, I felt obliged, if not by conscience at least by curiosity, to seek to get a view of the original material of the tale in all its pristine purity ; to see, if possible, how much of *Branwen*, once we excise the Irish episodes, is really old and traditional and how much is due to the story-telling artistry of its author. As with the question of Irish borrowings so here my main aim was to present the evidence and let it speak for itself. But, unfortunately, the sparse and fragmentary evidence on the Welsh origins of *Branwen* proved singularly inarticulate, and so I found myself reluctantly assuming the role of interpreter. Yet I

[1] *Studies in Honour of A. Marshall Elliott*, p. 19-51.

still sought to stay close by the facts and avoid any conclusions that seemed too elaborate for the wisps of evidence from which they were drawn. At many points I have diverged from the interpretation which Gruffydd foreshadowed in his various references to the Second Branch, sometimes out of complete conviction and sometimes simply because I thought the opposite case worth stating. One fact emerges clearly : that the story of *Branwen* is much later than the remaining three Branches of the *Mabinogi* and has fewer roots in tradition. I have gone further and treated it as an almost entirely untraditional piece of work for which in its main outline one has little right to postulate oral development of any kind (which is not to deny the traditional nature of many of its constituent elements). Whether that is the correct view only further and more detailed research can show, and my hope is that by presenting the evidence anew I may have made it a little easier for others to carry out that task.

Perhaps the investigation of the tale will also enable the reader to come closer to an appreciation of the working methods of this eleventh century Welsh writer, to see him assembling his materials and to observe how he set about combining this collection of extremely disparate traditions and literary fragments into one whole and unified tale. If he does not appear to have been completely successful in this, it is largely due to the fact that we, his captious readers, have the advantage of knowing some of his sources. Whoever he was, he was no primitive story-teller, nor even a literary compiler in the sense of some of his Irish contemporaries who were then at work preserving their country's heritage of story and legend. His attitude and his methods were too modern for that. In the work of his Irish counterpart the predominating characteristic would have been a sort of conservatism or *pietas* with regard to tradition, in other words, what was sanctified by age; the formal perfection of the tale would have been in most cases rather a secondary consideration, in keeping with a literature that never tore itself free from the dominating influence of oral recitation. On the other hand the author of *Branwen* was

obviously a man who put the style and structure of his tale before any considerations of fidelity to native tradition. His aim was to create a piece of literature to be judged independently on its own merits, and not as some reflection of the traditions of his forbears. With this in mind, perhaps we should, after our attempts to dissect his text and trace its origins, sit back, relax and read him as he would wish to be read.

# APPENDIX

Scarcely had I received the proofs of the above study when Professor A. O. H. Jarman published an article summarizing Gruffydd's views on the development of the Second Branch.[1] According to the writer, it is based upon the lectures which Gruffydd delivered yearly on this subject in the University College of Cardiff as well as upon his notes and papers, which are now in the National Library of Wales. The latter I read before completing my own study, but I must confess that I found them too tentative and too disconnected to provide in themselves a reasonably clear picture of Gruffydd's line of reasoning. It may be presumed therefore that it was the more coherent argument of the lectures that enabled Jarman to embody these notes in a consistent and comprehensive pattern. Of course most of the content of this summary is reflected in Gruffydd's published works and consequently in my own references to them in the course of the above study, but there is one important section of his interpretation which does not appear to be foreshadowed elsewhere. For the sake of completeness I shall paraphrase the relevant passage :

The second stage of the development of *Branwen* consisted in the confusion of the original theme of Pryderi's expedition with the story of the *Voyage of Bran.* The latter is the O.I. tale which relates how Bran and his companions set out on a sea-voyage that brought them to the happy Otherworld, the Land of Women. It was written down probably in the seventh century, but doubtless it had existed in oral form among the Goidelic population which had settled in the coastal areas of Wales during the last centuries of the Roman period and the beginning of the Dark Ages. When these people came to speak Welsh, naturally the tale entered their new language. By this time Bran mac Febail of the Irish tale had become Brân fab Llŷr, and soon the story of his voyage was confused with that of Pryderi's attack on Annwfn,

[1] *Llên Cymru* IV, 129-34.

which development was made all the easier by the fact that the two stories told of sea-voyages to Otherworld islands. Consequently Brân replaced Pryderi as the leader of an expedition across the sea, not from Ireland, but from Wales. One name for the island to which Bran voyaged in the original version of his tale was *Ynys y Cedyrn*, that is 'The Island of the Giants,' but after Bran, who was himself a giant according to tradition, had been established in Wales or Britain, this name was taken to refer to the Island of Britain. Next Ireland replaced the Otherworld island as the destination of the voyage, and, since the warlike nature of Pryderi's expedition had not been forgotten, the new version of the tale took the form of an account of an attack on Ireland carried out by Brân. But even yet, in the extant text of the Second Branch, traces of the old descriptions of the happy island remain in the passages telling of the time spent at Harlech and Gwales by the survivors from Ireland.

It will be seen that the aim of this passage is to explain how Brân replaced Pryderi as the leader of the overseas expedition. This is a question which I myself made no attempt to answer, beyond noting how Cú Chulaínn had replaced Cú Roí mac Dáire in a very similar adventure related in Irish literature. The Irish instance does, of course, show that this sort of change may result from nothing more complicated than a shifting of emphasis or a change in loyalties on the part of the story-tellers, whose craft, it should be kept in mind, consisted to a great extent in the ability to adapt old narratives to new circumstances and also to new characters. This is probably sufficient to explain why, in the poem *Preiddeu Annwn*, it is Arthur who leads the expedition to the Otherworld and not Pryderi, as seems to have been the case in the original form of the Second Branch.

To say this is not to reject Gruffydd's theory, but merely to emphasise that it represents a conscious attempt to fit certain apparently unrelated facts into a neat and all-embracing pattern, and that this pattern derives from Gruffydd's instinct for correlation and correspondence rather than from a close investigation of the available evidence. But even if one were to reject his theory, the fact is

that the very lack of evidence which makes it largely hypothetical would also make it impossible to disprove. At the same time it is noticeable that he is forced to make certain assumptions which appear more convincing in the context of the theory than when viewed in isolation or in relation to the extant text of *Immram Brain*. For instance, we are told that Bran mac Febail became Brân fab Llŷr. This may be so, but the only support for it seems to be that it suits the theory. Then the explanation of the term *Ynys y Cedyrn* as a name for Britain takes for granted, first that this, or rather a corresponding Gaelic term, was one of the names of the island to which Bran voyaged in the original Irish tale, for which assumption, as far as I am aware, there is no evidence ; and secondly that Bran—the original pre-Britannic Bran moreover—was a giant according to tradition, although there is no trace of such a tradition in the Irish tale and the Welsh evidence is, at most, ambiguous.[1] But most important of all is Gruffydd's assumption that *Immram Brain* existed already in oral form several centuries before it was recorded towards the end of the seventh century and that it was brought to Wales by the Goidelic-speaking peoples who formed settlements there. It is a vexed question amongst Irish scholars how much, if any, of *Immram Brain* did exist orally, even in the seventh century immediately before the extant text was written down. We know, of course, that the basic theme of the journey to the Otherworld was a familiar feature of the oral tradition of the Irish, but in *Immram Brain* it has been re-created in new terms by someone with monastic associations. So much a part of the extant text is this re-interpretation that it is practically impossible to excise the 'christianized' elements without reducing the tale to the bare outline of the Otherworld journey which is common to a number of early Irish tales. This has led one Irish scholar even to refuse to recognise many of the apparently traditional elements and to see the whole text as a 'Christian allegory',[2] and, even though I

[1] It also takes for granted that *cedyrn* in the name Ynys y Cedryn is a synonym for *cewri*, 'giants,' although there is little or no evidence to support this equation.

[2] J. Carney, *Studies in Ir. Lit. and Hist.*, p.280 ff.

feel that this is too extreme a view, nevertheless it does give some idea of the problems which Gruffydd's theory so conveniently ignores.

There is, moreover, one important question which this theory inevitably suggests : In *Rhiannon* (p.81) Gruffydd argued that Manannán mac Lir became Manawydan fab Llŷr through a scribal error, that is to say he was borrowed into Welsh within the period of writing. But, since Manannán plays a prominent part in *Immram Brain* (and I should not be surprised if it was this coupling of the two characters which prompted Gruffydd to connect the Irish Bran mac Febail and the Welsh Brân fab Llŷr in the first place), then, it may be asked, why was he not introduced into Wales centuries earlier in the oral version of this tale? The only possible answer seems to be that he was not then part of the tale or had not yet come into existence as a traditional figure ; but, in that case, might the same not be said of Bran mac Febail with as much justification?

And yet, in spite of these deficiencies in his argument, it would be presumptuous to reject Gruffydd's conclusions. What he has done is to go further, much further, than a strict assessment of the available evidence will permit, but, still, it is a chastening thought that one can never discount his ability to triumph over the cold logic of evidence. Perhaps, some time in the future, it will be shown conclusively that the human Bran of the Irish tale was indeed originally one with the Welsh god Brân ; but, in the meantime, one must record those difficulties which Gruffydd ignored or passed by in silence.

# GENERAL INDEX

(*This index does not include* Branwen, Ireland, Irish, Britain, Britons and Island of the Mighty, *since these occur very frequently throughout the text. Words and titles are printed in italics*).


Aber Alaw 14.
Aberffraw 9, 138, 156, 159, 160.
Aber Henfelen 14-5, 84-8, 132, 145-6, 149.
Achall 100.
*adar Rhiannon* 103.
Aedán (bishop of Glendalough) 65-6.
Aed mac Ainmirech 21, 65, 66, 71.
Aidan 186.
*aided* 174.
*Aided Con Rot* 47.
Ailill (king of Connacht) 73, 80, 99.
*aimser na cóicedach* 35-6.
Airgialla 66.
Airmed (d. of Dian Cécht) 54.
Aithechthuatha 32, 33, 35.
Alaw 98, 155.
Alba 35.
*Albu* 127.
Aldfrith 6.
Anglesey 108, 136.
Annwvn, Annwf(y)n 148, 151, 175, 191.
Archan 109.
Ard Lemnachta 55, 57-8, 91-2.
Arthen (s. of Sulien) 184.
Arthur 96, 147, 165, 175, 192.
Áth Cliath 118.
Athena 39.
Athlone 120.
Author's knowledge of Ireland 117-21, 186.

Balar 54, 55.
Beheading Test 44-5.
Bé Iúda (d. of the king of Norway) 106.
Belach Conghlais 21.
Belach Dubthaire 21.
Beli (s. of Mynogan) 8, 111, 113.
Bendigeidfran (s. of Llŷr) 6, 23, 24-6, 38, 47, 57, 60-1, 64, 71-2, 77, 79, 84-95, 97, 102, 109, 116, 117-20 131, 137, 139, 144-5, 149, 151, 153, 156, 157, 160, 161, 164, 177.
Bendigeidfran, Beheading of 91-5.
Bendigeidfran carrying musicians 89-91.
Bendigeidfran, size of 89, 130.
Beuno 94.
Birds of Rhiannon 85-6, 91, 102-9.
Bláthíne (Bláthnat) 47, 106, 152-3, 176.
Blodeuwedd 153.
*Blow to Branwen, The* 144.
Boia 184-5.
*bonllwm* 116.
*Bórama* 20, 22, 65, 67-71.
Boyne 21.
Brân (s. of Llŷr) 60-1, 94, 108, 116, 123, 129-39, 140, 143-7, 149-50, 151, 154, 155, 163-5, 169-73, 175-6, 188, 191-4.
*Bran* (river name) 134.
Brandub (s. of Eochu) 21-2, 65-7.
Brân Galed o'r Gogledd 137-8.
Bran mac Febail 103, 133-4, 139, 191-4.
Branodunum 135.
Brân s. of Iwerydd (?) 164.
Branwen, Death of 98-101.
Breechless Irishmen 116.
Brí Bruachbrecc 100.
Bricriu Nemthenga 19-20, 72, 79-84, 160-1, 166, 179.
Brí Léith 100.
Bro Brân 137.
Bron (the Maimed King) 60.
Brón (Bron) mac Alloit 132-3.
Bronwen 154-5, 169.
Bruiden Meic Da Réo 34.
Bryn Saith Marchog 136, 165.

Cadair Fronwen 135, 154.
Cadmus 39.
Cadog 158-9.
Caer 107.
Caer Brane 135.
Caer Lŷr 136.
Caer Seint 12.
Caer Vallwch 30.
Caesar 112.
Cairbre Cattchenn ('C. Cathead') 33-7, 50, 180.
*Caithréim Cellaig* 96-7.
*Caithréim Conghail Chláiringnigh* 106-7.
Caledfwlch 147.
*Calumniated Wife* 4, 49, 156, 161-73.
Cantire 47.
Cassivcllaunus 112, 114, 115.
Castell Dinas Brân 135, 138.
Caswallawn (s. of Beli) 15, 61, 111-6.
*Cath Belaig Dúin Bolg* 65.
*Cath Maige Tuired* (The Second Battle of M.T.) 54-9.
Cauldrons, C. of Revivification, of Plenty, 4, 38, 45-8, 50-64, 66, 79, 89, 106, 130, 147, 148, 151-3, 158, 165, 167, 176.

Cellach (St.) 96.
*Cennach ind Ruanada* 43, 44, 48.
Chrétien de Troyes 59, 163.
Cichuil (w. of Fer Caille) 40.
Cill Rannairech 22.
Clíodna 105-6.
Clonmacnois 120.
*clwydeu* 118.
Cobthach Coel 17-8.
*coire aisic* 64.
*compert* 174.
Conaire Mór (s. of Eterscél) 24-5, 28-31, 36, 39-40, 87-88, 89, 93.
Conall Cernach 43, 75, 81, 100.
Conchobar (k. of Ulster) 18, 72-3, 80.
Conn 33.
Connacht 34, 96.
Connachtmen 74-6, 99.
*Conte du Graal* 59.
Corb Aulom 33.
Cormac mac Airt (k. of Ireland) 56, 64, 74, 77, 86, 126.
Cradawg (s. of Brân) 12, 15, 111, 136.
Crimthann Sciathbél (k. of Leinster) 53.
Cruachain 73.
Cruadín, Cú Chulainn's sword, 20.
Cruithnig 53.
Cú Chulainn 19-20, 23, 41, 43-5, 47-8, 81, 90, 152-3, 175-6, 192.
Culhwch 107.
*Culhwch ac Olwen* 107, 137, 147, 162, 165, 176.
Cumascach (s. of Aed mac Ainmirech) 21-2, 65.
Cú Roí mac Dáiri 44-5, 47-9, 106-7, 152-3, 175-6, 192.
Cwm Brân 136.
*cyfarwyddyd*, the primitive 125-6.
Cymidei Cymeinfoll 10, 39, 62.
Cynddelw 112.
Cynwyd 137.
Cyrridwen 50.

*dadeni* 62-4.
Da Derga 24, 36, 40, 46, 50, 57, 77, 87, 88, 90, 93.
Dagdae 56, 57.
Dál Riata 6.
Daniel (s. of Sulien) 184.
Date of *Branwen* 180-1.
*De Ave Phoenice* 104.
Deheubarth 186.
Deirdre 99, 179.
Deirg (na tri) 40-1.
Déisi 5.
Dian Cécht 54-5.
Din Brcin 138.
Dindshenchas 53, 72, 73, 100, 132-3.
Dinn Ríg 18.
Diwrnach 147, 165.
Domhnall (s. of Aed mac Ainmirech) 21.
Donn Bó 93.
Dublin 118, 120, 182.
Dubthach Dael Ulad (Daeltenga) 79-80.
Dún Bolg 65, 67, 68, 71.
Dún Féich 135.
Dún mBrain 135.
Dyfed 5, 114, 148, 185-6.

Éber (s. of Míl) 33.
*ebostol Pwyll a Phryderi* 149.
Echde Echbél 47.
Echel uordwyt twll 163.
*echtra* 108.
*Echtra Taidg meic Céin* 105.
Edcirnon 12, 136.
Efnisien 64-5, 69-70, 74, 77, 78-84, 156, 158-61, 166, 169, 171-2, 179.
*efnys* 83.
Eithne Imgel 33.
Éllim mac Conrach 32-3.
Emain Macha 73.
*englyn* 70-1.
Eogan 33.
Eogan Bél (k. of Connacht) 96.
*Epic of Gudrun* 166-7.
Érainn 5.
Éremón (s. of Míl) 33.
Etzel 168-9.
Euroswydd 8, 78.
Expedition to Ireland (Otherworld) 131, 145-50, 151-4, 164-5, 171, 173, 175-6, 192.

*Feasting in Harddlech* 144.
Feradach Finn Fechtnach 33.
Fer Caille 40-6, 49, 181.
Ferchertne 47.
Fergal (k. of Ireland) 93.
Fer Rogain 24, 25, 28, 29, 87.
Fflur 112.
Fiachu Araidc 33.
Fiachu Findolad (f. of Tuathal Techtmar) 32-33.
Fiana 127.
Finnabair (d. of Ailill and Medb) 99, 101.
Finnabair (d. of Lugaid Láigde) 100.
Finnabair Slébc 99.
Fir Bolg 54, 65.
Fir Fálgae 106.
Fir Fidga 53.
*firu(-a) Ochaine* 107.
Five Provinces, the 32-7.

Flann Fína 7.
*Fled Bricrenn* 26, 43-4, 48, 72, 80-4, 141-2, 160, 180.
Fomoire 54, 56.
Forgall Monach 129.
Fynnawn Wenvrewy 94.

Gabhrán (s. of Aed mac Ainmirech) 81.
*Gawain and the Green Knight* 44-5.
Geoffrey of Monmouth 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 183.
*ges* 40, 42, 87-8.
*Giolla an Fhiugha* 45.
Giraldus Cambrensis 117, 183.
Glasdámh 22.
*Glevi* 124.
*Glini* 124.
Glyn Rosyn 184.
Goidels 5, 33, 35, 54.
Gonemans 59.
Gorsedd Frân 135.
*Greid mab Eri* 124.
Gruffydd ap Cynan 32, 181.
Gudrun 167-8.
Guernin (*l.* Ferna) 186.
Gunther 168.
Guorthemir (Gwerthefyr) s. of Guorthigirn (Gwrtheyrn) 98.
Guto'r Glyn 137.
Gwales 84-6, 91, 92, 102-3, 108-9, 131, 178, 192.
Gwawl vab Clud 114.
*Gweir a Modron* 124.
Gwenfrewi 94.
Gwên uordwyt tylluras 163.
Gwern (s. of Matholwch) 11-13, 69, 77, 162, 165-6, 168-9, 171-2.
*Gwyddel* 136.
Gwynedd 5, 6, 55, 138, 181.

Hagen 168.
Harddlech, Harlech, 85, 91, 92, 102-3, 108-9, 131, 159, 160, 178, 192.
Head of Bendigeidfran 91-8.
Head of Bendigeidfran, Burial of 95-8.
Heads, speaking 92-5, 143.
Heilyn (s. of Gwyn) 85, 178.
Helen 27.
Helig fab Glannawg 110.
Hilde 167.
Homer 27.
House, the Great 71-8, 89, 130, 188.
Huns 169.

Iago ap Idwal Foel 181.
Ieuan (s. of Sulien) 184-5.
*Iliad* 27.
Illann mac Scanláin 71.
*immram* 108.
*Immram Brain* 103, 126, 129, 133-4, 137, 139, 191-4.
*indarba* 174.
Ingcél Caech 24, 28, 29, 87.
Inneoin 21.
inundation 109-11.
Iolo Goch 94.
Ír (s. of Míl) 33.
Irish settlements in Wales 5, 6, 11, 191.
Iron House, the 4, 16-23, 39, 41, 49, 170, 180.
Isle of Man 129.
Ithael 184.
Iuchna 106.

Jason 39.

Kent 113.
Kriemhild (w. of Siegfried) 168, 169.

Labraid Loingsech 17-18.
Lactantius 104.
*Lady of the Fountain, The* 45.
Lagin 17.
Land of Promise 104, 127.
Land of Shade 48.
Land of the Living 104.
Land of Women 103.
Layamon 117.
*Lebor Bretnach* 53.
*Lebor Gabála* 33, 53, 54, 57, 65.
Lé Fer Flaith (s. of Conaire) 40, 89.
Leinster 34, 53, 65, 96.
Leinsterman 17-8, 20, 65-6, 93, 95, 96.
Ler 123. *See also* Lir (Family of).
Liath mac Celtchair 100, 114, 115.
Lifris of Llancarfan 159, 183.
Lir, Family of 122.
Llanbadarn Fawr 184.
Llanishen 82.
Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid 6, 38-42, 48, 49, 59, 62, 81, 92, 152, 156, 180.
Llashar (s. of Llayssar Llaesgygwyt) 39. *See also preceding name.*
Llassar Llaes Gygnwyt 39. *See two preceding names.*
*lledieith* 123.
Llenlleawc the Irishman 147.
Llew 153.
Lli 109.
Llinon 12, 117-21.
Lluch Lleawc 147.
Llwyd vab Cilcoed 114, 115.
Llyn Bran 135.
Llyn y Pair (The Lake of the Cauldron) 10, 38.
Llŷr 123, 130, 136, 154.

Llŷr, family of 30, 122, 135-6, 154, 165.
Llŷr, sons of 145, 149.
Llywarch Prydydd y Moch 112.
Loch Coire 38.
Loch Derg 120.
Loch Guala Umai 38.
Lóchíne Lonn (g.s. of Lonán) 22.
Loch Ree 120.
Loegaire (k. of Ireland) 96.
Loegaire Buadach 43, 81.
London 14, 15, 84, 116.
Lug 54-5, 147.

Mac Cécht (s. of Snaide Teichid) 24-7, 87, 89-91, 93, 177, 181.
Mac Dathó 75-7, 80.
*macgnímartha* 4, 174.
Mac in Óc 107.
Maedoc (St.) 186.
Maelcoba (s. of Aed mac Ainmirech) 21.
Mael Mura of Othain 53.
Maes Gwyddneu (Cantre'r Gwaelod) 110.
Mag Cró 34.
Mag Finnabrach 100.
Mag mBroin 132.
Mag Mell 133.
Mag Mon 129.
Maine Milscothach 29-30, 181.
*Mallolwch* 30.
*Mana(-u)* g.*Manann* 127.
*Manand(-an)* 124, 128-9.
Manannán mac Alloit 132.
Manannán mac Lir 86, 122-3, 126-7, 129-31, 133-4, 138-9, 194.
Manapii 129.
*Manauid(-an)* 124, 128-9. *See also* Manawydan s. of Llŷr.
**Manăvā* 127, 129.
*Manaw* 127, 128.
*manawyd, mynawyd* 128.
*Manawydan fab Llŷr* 112-6.
Manawydan (s. of Llŷr) 79, 108, 111, 112, 114-5, 122-34, 139, 146, 149, 154, 194.
*Marwnat Corroi M. Dayry* 153.
Matholwch (k. of Ireland) 23, 24, 29-30, 38-9, 42, 49, 64, 71, 79, 143, 156-7, 159, 160.
*Matholwch* 30.
*Math vab Mathonwy* 4, 54-5, 153.
Meath 34.
Medb (q. of Connacht) 73, 99.
Meinlas 112.
Menapii 129.
*Men in the Bags, the* 64-71, 157, 168.
*Mesca Ulad* 18, 20, 23, 27.
Miach (s. of Dian Cécht) 54.
*Milscothach* 30.
Mona 129.
Monaid Cumascaig 22.
Monaig (Manaig) 129.
*Monand* 129. *See also* Manannán mac Lir.
*Monapia* 129.
*Monapos* 129.
monasteries, monastic scholars, 7, 133-4, 182-6, 193.
Moncha 129.
*Monindán* 129. *See also* Manannán mac Lir.
Morddwyd Tyllion 61, 77, 146, 149, 162-5.
Munster 33, 34.
Murchadh (s. of Brian Bóraimhe) 45-6.
*Mynweir a Mynord* 124.
Mynyw 184.

Nant Manawyd 135.
Nennius 53, 57, 183.
*Nibelungenlied* 166-9.
Nisien 78-84, 160.

Ochtriuil (s. of Dian Cécht) 54.
Odgar (s. of Aedd) 147, 165.
Óengus (s. of Airmedach) 21.
Óengus, Mac ind Óc 107.
*Older Edda, the* 166.
Ól nGualai 38.
*One Forbidden Thing, the* 86.
Onomastic tales 118, 156-61.
*Orgain Denna Rig* 17, 23.
Otherworlds 40, 42, 45-6, 50, 56, 77, 85-6, 102-5, 108, 127, 129, 131-4, 145-50, 178, 191-3.
Oxford 112, 113.

*Peir Dadeni* 38, 47, 55-6, 62, 64, 94, 95. *See also* Cauldrons.
Pen Annwvn (Annwfyn) 4, 50, 147-8.
Penarddun (m. of Bendigeidfran) 78, 111.
Peniarth MS.6 119.
*Penn* 94, 95, 143. *See also* Head of Bendigeidfran.
Perceval 59.
*Peredur* 59.
place-names 6, 118, 134-6, 157, 165.
Pliny 129.
*Preiddeu Annwn* 146-7, 149-50, 153, 173, 175-6, 192.
Priam 27.
*Priteri* 124.

Pryderi 4, 112, 113, 146, 149, 174-5, 186, 191-2.
Ptolemy 129.
Pwyll 40, 149.
*Pwyll* 161.

Ráith Brain 135.
*Rape of Pryderi* 174.
Resuscitation tales 53-61, 91-3, 167.
Rhedfoe fab Rheged 110.
Rhiannon 40, 106, 107, 112, 140, 161. *See also* Birds of Rhiannon.
Rhygyfarch (Ricemarch) 159, 183-7.
Rhys ap Tewdwr 181.
**Rīgatona* 106.
Rige 21.
Rochad Rigderg mac Faithemain 99.

Saighead (d. of Cairtheann Corr) 106-7.
St. David, Life of 159, 184-6.
St. David's 184.
St. Modomnoc 186.
Sawyl Benuchel 158-9.
*Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* 141.
*Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* 74-8, 80, 82, 180.
Seithenhin 110.
Seith Marchawg 136, 165.
Sencha mac Ailella 19, 80, 82-4, 160.
Shannon 34, 120-1.
*síd* 105, 107.
Siegmund 166-8.
Siggeir Signe 166.
Sinfjötle 167-8.
*Singing of the Birds of Rhiannon* 140, 142, 144.
Sláine 54.
Srub Brain 139.
Strathclyde 6.
Suibne Geilt 6.
*Suidigud Tige Midchuarda* 72.
Sulien 184-7.
Supernatural lapse of time 103.

Tadg mac Céin 105.
*Táin Bó Cuailnge* 99, 125, 142.
Talebolion, Talybolion 98, 156-8
Taliesin 145, 146, 147, 149, 164.
Tara 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 64, 73, 96, 188.
Tech Midchuarta 64, 72-4, 77.
Teithi Hen 110.
Tethra 129.
*Thidreks Saga* 166-9.
Thirteen Treasures of the Isle of Britain 137.
*Three Happy Concealments* 96.
*Three Unhappy Disclosures* 96.
Tipraite Tírech 33.
Tír na nÓg 46.
*Tochmarch Emire* 129.
*Togail Bruidne Da Derga* 24-31, 34, 36, 39-43, 46, 49, 50, 76, 84, 87-91, 93, 181.
Triads 110, 112, 144, 155, 169.
Triscatail 20.
Tristan 6.
Trostán 53, 55.
Tuatha Dé Danann 54, 56, 105.
Tuathal Techtmar 32-3.
Tuatha of Fidga and Fochmann 53.
Tudfwlch 137.
Tudur Aled 124, 139.

Ua Flainn Arda 23.
Uath mac Imomain ('Terror son of Great Fear') 43-5, 180-1.
Úgaine Már 32.
Ulster 33, 74, 152.
Ulster Cycle 35-6, 74-5, 79-80, 83.
Ulstermen 19-20, 38, 74-6, 80-1, 96, 106, 160.
Uther 117.

*Vita David* 159, 183-6.
*Vita S. Cadoci* 158-9, 183.
*Volsunga Saga* 166, 168.
*vreithel vanawyt* 126, 128.

Waste Land, the 60, 114.
White Mount (*y Gwynuryn*) 14, 96.

*ymgyuot* 75-6.
*Ysbydaut Benn* 144.
*ysbydawt* 144-5.
*Ysbydawt Uranwen a Matholwch* 140.
*Ysbydawt Urdaul Benn* 140, 143-5.
Ysbyddaden Bencawr 107.
*Yspadawt Uran* 144-5.
*Yvain* 45.

Zeus 39.

# UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS

# *Selected Publications*

## MATH VAB MATHONWY

By the late PROFESSOR W. J. GRUFFYDD

An inquiry into the origins and development of the fourth branch of the Mabinogi, with the text and a translation. 1937

Crown 8vo, pp., xvii, 392. 10s.6d., *by post* 11s.7d.

## RHIANNON

By the late PROFESSOR W. J. GRUFFYDD

An inquiry into the first and third branches of the Mabinogi. This book forms a companion volume to the above. 1953

Demy 8vo, pp. 111. 8s.6d., *by post* 9s.3d.

## WALES AND THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND

By PROFESSOR R. S. LOOMIS

*Price* 21s., *by post* 23s.2d.

## FOLKLORE AND MYTH IN THE MABINOGION

By the late PROFESSOR W. J. GRUFFYDD

*Price* 2s.6d., *by post* 2s.9d.

## HRAFNKELS SAGA FREYSGOÐA

A study by SIGURÐUR NORDAL

Translated by R. GEORGE THOMAS, M.A., PH.D.

*Price* 7s.6d., *by post* 8s.2d.

## TRADDODIAD LLENYDDOL IWERDDON

Gan yr ATHRO J. E. CAERWYN WILLIAMS

*Pris* 15s., *drwy'r post* 16s.

## CHWEDLAU CYMRAEG CANOL

Gan yr ATHRO A. O. H. JARMAN

*Pris* 12s.6c.h., *drwy'r post* 13s.3c

UNIVERSITY REGISTRY, CATHAYS PARK, CARDIFF